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THE WAY HEARTS GO

THE WAY HEARTS GO

A SOCIAL COMEDY

BY

LAURENCE HAYWARD

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E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
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THE WAY HEARTS GO

THE WAY HEARTS GO

CHAPTER I

MRS. MANTON COMES TO DOWNHAM

THERE'S a little twist often given to a well-known proverb—which in its original form piously states the vanity of human wishes—to the effect that it is man that proposes, but woman who disposes. A very jolly, or a very cynical, profanation (is it not?), just as you may take it; but what a merry, laughable, life-giving, half-glad, half-sad affair the illustrating of it forms—a time to make old hearts that look on warm with sympathy toward us and love us, and young eyes, too unawakened yet to comprehend wholly what is going on, open wide with fluttering interest; and our own hearts at last, when all the fume and fret and agony and joy have passed a little by, feel that something inestimably beauti-

ful has come and gone! Ah, these ladies! they are terrors and troubles and bothers, but such very delightful ones after all!

Of all of which doctrine I hope to offer some evidence.

Mrs. Manton pushed up her veil, as the rickety public hack rattled away from the station at Downham, and pulled out from her *portmonnaie* a wee mirror and other necessaries of the toilet. She was the kind of woman you could always depend upon to have some *papier poudré* about her, and she proceeded to use it now.

"He's an old bear, of course," she thought, as she drew together her shrewd lips and patted about them. "But it's always worth taking a chance with them—you never can tell."

The morning was one of those white days in early June before the whole heat of summer has come, when everything seems too perfect for life. The apple blossoms were not quite gone in the orchards coating the rolling Essex hills, the earliest daisies and buttercups were painting the fields, and here and there in the

gardens of the trim Massachusetts farm houses or *pieds-à-terre* that she passed the roses and peonies were in bloom. A haze of heat lay over everything, and the country seemed to her deliriously, deliciously green.

Only the utter stillness of the landscape through which the vehicle rattled depressed Mrs. Manton. It seemed as if it were not in sympathy with any one who was trying to accomplish anything. And she had so much before her to accomplish!

She was laughing to herself, nevertheless, as the hack turned in at the long avenue and slowly creaked up the hill toward Mortimer Dane's.

"Ill-natured people would call me an adventuress, I suppose," she said to herself self-consciously. "But, then, what can one do with a couple of chicks to look after? It's all in the game, anyway. It's rather clever in me too, to have taken him by surprise."

"I hope Mr. Dane is at home this morning," she was asking a couple of minutes later, when her ring at the door of his grand mansion had been answered.

"Miss Dane, did you say, madam?"

"So it was really a rarity for Morty to see ladies!" she thought to herself.

"No, I think I will see Mr. Dane, if you will let me," she answered, overpowering with her smile the woman, who, her keen eyes were telling her, was just the sort of housemaid her cousin would have. Gold earrings in her ears, too! "You will see that he gets my card, won't you, please?"

Her foot tapped impatiently as she waited in the big drawing-room—looking prim and rather unlivable with the linen covers over the furniture. But it was not in trepidation, and she smiled grimly when at last she heard his step approaching.

"Well, Morty," she said, rising as he came in through the farther door, "are you surprised to see me?"

She was surprised on her part as she sized him up. He had changed so little in the last fifteen or twenty years. His hair was not turned—only sprinkled with gray—and aside from the stoop in his shoulders she could see few signs that he was fifty.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mrs. Manton," he said, dropping her gloved hand after the slightest touch.

She laughed.

"You mean the 'unexpected' part of it all by yourself, eh, Morty? Why under the sun don't you call me by my first name?"

"Very well, Lou," he said gravely. "How have you been all these years?"

"Oh, never mind about me—I'm well, as you see. Are you still a woman hater?"

The man stiffened with a touch of self-consciousness.

"I have never *hated* women."

"You tolerate us, eh? Oh, I know all about you. I want to hear later, too, though I must say it appears a little hard on Amy. But meanwhile you're not frightened at me, are you? I shan't bite you, nor even marry you."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Morty, looking alarmed.

"You know I'm a widow, after all, Morty."

She turned her eyes on him out of a spirit of pure deviltry.

The man's face flushed. He put his hands

nervously behind his back, then dropped them at his sides again, and unconsciously added a foot to the distance between them.

She laughed good-naturedly and with a whisk of her pongee skirt turned away from him.

"Come, let's go over here and sit down. It isn't, after all, about ourselves that I want to talk, but about Alfred. You know I had him over the other night."

She placed herself at one corner of the seat in the big window where she could see out over the garden on the side slope, and gingerly, suspiciously, calculating his distance, Mortimer Dane sat down on the other.

She could observe him perfectly now, and steal a glance at his face whenever she wanted.

"It seems like old times to be with you again," she said more softly. "You've really changed very little."

"I don't see but you're as taking a woman as ever, as far as that goes," he said sharply. "Do you still—I remember you used to be a good deal of a flirt."

She smiled a sweet, sad smile, as if for days gone by.

"Put utterly behind me, Morty," she answered gravely. "We've both got kiddies to look after now, and are old people ourselves. Why, I'm all but forty myself."

"Forty?" he said, his eyebrows contracting in an effort at calculation.

"No—no—stop!" she cried quickly, laughing and holding out a finger which she pointed sharply at him. "Don't you know that you mustn't think on such a subject?—you could never get it by arithmetic anyway. Perhaps, seeing we're cousins, I'd better plead guilty to another year, after all. Forty-one, shall we call it? Thirty-nine is my courtesy age."

"I see," he said, smiling faintly, as one might at a joke he did not quite approve. And yet, after all, it occurred to him already, she was amusing, this creature. "So you met Alfred?"

"Isn't he fearfully clever at his books, Morty? You must be proud of him. I've heard him spoken of as what they call at Har-

vard 'a regular shark.' Are you still as fond of study yourself?"

A kind of self-conscious tenderness seemed to steal into Dane's eyes.

"Is there anything so well worth being fond of?" he exclaimed. "To read and orientate oneself in the past, in the long results of time, to live in other men's lives and thoughts, undisturbed by their troubles, but sharing all their joys, to feel oneself enriched by all they have learned and dreamed, to walk with Homer and Horace and Lucretius and Goethe—"

"Oh, how splendid!" interrupted Lou Manton, foreseeing that the man before her was becoming rhapsodical. "How I envy you all your learning. Only it makes one feel so fearfully stupid. We women know so little, you know—"

He noticed that her eyes were very bright as they turned toward his, but there seemed such an expression of wistful appreciation for his words in them, that he was not at all disturbed, as he usually was when such things as women's eyes were turned on him. And then her words

suggested something of which he was fond of thinking.

"Yes," he said gravely, "that is true. The feminine mind seems incapable of detaching itself from the present and the personal, and giving itself up to the impersonal. That is why we have never had any women poets or artists or musicians of the first order. You are good imitators, but lacking in originality utterly. Even in scholarship, the feminine mind—"

She had kept her eyes turned humbly upon his as if eager to drink in every drop of wisdom, though inwardly laughing uproariously all the while. Men were such easy creatures to handle! Here she interrupted with a gentle question, as if even he would recognize the propriety of the subject.

"I wonder, Morty, if you wouldn't think that Meg was somewhat scholarly—I have taken such pains with her. She's just getting through Radcliffe, you know."

The continual appeal worked on Dane. No —he was not a woman-hater, he said to himself once more. He did not want to be both-

ered with the foolishness and the frivolity that seemed to form so large a portion of femininity, to be sure. He kept womankind away from him on that account, he would admit. But he had always felt, nevertheless, that there was a place for women in the world. Properly recognizing the superiority of the masculine mind, bringing themselves to help rather than hinder it in its serious work, they might be of great assistance. He felt agreeably judicial at the moment, to be referred to for a decision.

"Meg is your daughter, Lou?"

"The older, yes. And Clare is the other. I'm afraid you won't like Clare—she's rather frivolous, poor thing."

Something in her sentence—the indicative mood, perhaps—made him draw back. His face grew suspicious again, and his hands, which had fallen easily to his sides, came together awkwardly in his lap. After all, he was talking with a woman, he remembered, and women were proverbially wily.

"But let's not talk about them," said Mrs. Manton, upon whom not one move on his part

had been lost. "What is Alfred going to do with himself, now he's through Harvard?"

"Do with himself?" said Morty Dane, the look of suspicion only gradually leaving his face. "What do you mean?"

"He's not going over to the other side this summer, Morty?"

"No, he thinks of spending some time abroad this winter, but not just now."

"So you will have the pleasure of having him with you this summer. I know you will enjoy that. How will he amuse himself?"

"Amuse himself?" echoed Morty, honestly not quite understanding. The idea had never entered his mind that life would not be as interesting at Downham Hundreds as anywhere else in the world.

"You don't think it will be rather dull for him after Cambridge?"

Ah, he comprehended. What superficial creatures women were! Children, after all—always wanting to be diverted. It seemed a good opening to drop an idea into his cousin's mind.

"You know, Lou," he said, trying not to speak too harshly, "it will be always open to him to think."

"To think?" she echoed, in her turn not quite understanding.

He turned his eyes to her appealing ones. He was fond of an audience always, and the hour was proving more enjoyable to him than he could have expected.

"Yes—to think," he said, speaking with emphasis on the verb. "No occupation, surely, is more worthy for the man fitted for it. To use the powers of observation and reflection and intuition that go to make up thought—"

"Oh, Morty, what a silly goose you must think me. Of course you and Alfred always have such rich resources in your own minds. But—I was only thinking—"

She hesitated and turned her eyes to him appealingly.

"What?" he encouraged her, although rather regretting that he had been interrupted just as he was getting a-going. He had in his mind so many interesting reflections on the subject of thought!

"Don't you think it's well to give a young man all the experience possible before he settles down to such serious business? Now, Alfred—wouldn't it be good for him if he saw a little of the world first?"

"He's been in Europe the two last summers and can go again if he wants to."

"Yes, I know. I was thinking more of the social world. You know he'll have to face it sometime."

Dane looked a little uneasily at her, as if vaguely anticipating that something disturbing was coming.

"You know all about there are—well, to speak quite frankly, Morty, there are girls."

"Girls?" he echoed blankly.

"Yes—girls. Some of them will be wanting to marry him before you know it," she said, pressing her lips firmly together.

"Marry Alfred?" he cried, standing up from the seat and gazing down at her with alarm.

"Yes—marry Alfred. Perhaps you don't realize what a keen world it is still on that sort of thing."

He let himself back into the seat with an

audible groan. Lou almost had it in her heart to be sorry for him, his woe was so sincere. And yet all the time she was laughing at the picture she had in her mind of the rather awkward young man she had entertained at dinner earlier in the week. Want to marry him? "Pooh!" she was thinking. "It will take all the Dane millions to make him go down."

"It *is* sad!" she commented aloud, watching her cousin as he went about his favorite occupation of thinking. "Still, it is necessary."

He got up again and, putting his hands in his pockets, paced the floor two or three times before her, his head sunk on his breast.

"I have always said," he said fiercely, stopping at last, "that women were the devil."

The thought that he had always given utterance to that opinion, seemed to cheer him up. His cousin not answering, he looked toward her after a minute.

"You don't think Alfred cares anything about them, do you, Lou?"

"I should not suspect him of it," she answered, with more sarcasm than she let ap-

pear. "Still, you ought to begin to consider it, Morty. You've got the family to consider, and your money."

He looked at her with a question.

"There've got to be such things as children, you know," she said calmly.

"Great God!" he cried, "so there have."

"That's why I came down," she said, repressing a smile. "He ought really to see a little more of life than he has. He's a bright boy and all that, but he knows so much about books and so little outside them, that it isn't quite safe for him to be out alone, with I don't know how many millions of yours, to come to him, and so many of my awful sex waiting around and aware of the fact. Can't I be of help to you? Here are my girls and I, cramped up in our ugly little Brookline flat, just dying for a bit of the country, and here are you in your grand castle and nobody in it. Why not let me bring them down in July for a few weeks? They'll be good comrades for Alfred, and I'll guarantee he'll learn a few things he never knew before."

"Here?" said Morty, looking at her, his face screwed up into a look of protest and his voice sounding like a sob.

"What a remorseless old cat I am!" exclaimed Lou Manton to herself. "Still, it's got to be."

"Why not, Morty?" she said aloud. "Dear Aunt Sarah is with you, and that will make it quite *comme il faut*—I don't suppose it would be, just that we're second cousins. Let me tell you, there can be no better thing for a young man brought up without sisters or mother than to find himself thrown in in some such intimate way with a pair of girls. You'll find it'll be a very suit of chain mail against some of the worst sort that are about."

Morty Dane was pacing up and down the room, one hand in his hair. His face bore traces of the spiritual struggle of a man who knows he must undergo martyrdom, but is thinking of the lion's jaws.

"But me—my hours—my books—my study —my—"

"Look at me, Morty," said Mrs. Manton incisively. "Look at me. Do I have the ap-

pearance of a silly to you? Do you think I don't know what sacrifices you will be making if you do this for your boy? Do you think I haven't heard of your "History of German Pessimism," or of your "Parnassus of the Latin Poets," or that I don't share with Alfred his pride in what you are going to accomplish? I am a woman—ignorant, I fear, and silly—but not so bad as that. I can be proud of your learning if I have none myself. If you consent to my plan, it shall be my sole object while here to consider you and to keep my family and myself from interfering one teeny bit in your work or your habits. Indeed, if I could be of any positive help—if I could copy notes or learn to work a typewriter, or do anything that could be of the slightest use to you, my happiness would be complete. Will you let us come?"

"What a horrid creature I am!" she was inwardly thinking. "Still, if one's a beggar—And you can't be too sympathetic, apparently. Amy was cleverer than I in those days, but I always thought she made the mistake of not taking him seriously."

"How long do you want to come for?" he asked plaintively.

"Don't be so overpoweringly hospitable," she said. "Why, let's see. I can give up my flat at the end of the month, and then if you don't want us in August, we can go somewhere to the seashore. Shall we say the first of July?"

"I always work in the morning from nine—"

"Bless your heart, Meg and Clare and I are a trio of spirits. I'll guarantee after the first day, you'll quite forget we're here."

Mr. Dane seemed to wonder and be doubtful.

"I'll have to see what Aunt Sarah says."

"Dear Aunt Sarah—how is she? You'll let me stay to luncheon and meet her, won't you? I always admired her immensely."

Dane looked at her again suspiciously.

"Yes, you'll have to stay to lunch," he said. "It's one now."

Lou Manton felt she could thoroughly afford to laugh. She was flushed with the triumph of an accomplishment she had hardly dared to expect, and too happy for anything.

It was seldom that she let herself go on the sea of happiness, but she did now, waxing eloquent on Morty's kindness, and displaying some intention even of kissing him. He drew his hand away from her, however, in fright.

"Excuse me, Lou," he said nervously over his shoulder, as he walked hurriedly to the door. "I'll send Aunt Sarah in directly."

She kissed her hand to his back at any rate, and then throwing herself down on the long seat, leaned on one elbow, looking out of the window.

"Poor old Morty! what an utter ninny he's become. I believe I could take him for myself if I wanted."

She sat there in deep thought for five or six minutes, till the door was opened and an older woman came in.

"Hullo!" cried Lou, jumping up. "You dear woman—how glad I am to see you! Do you remember me, Aunt Sarah?"

She had tripped across the floor in another second, thrown her arms about the elder woman and kissed her, and then laughing, her eyes dancing with the excitement and happiness

that were over her at the success of her project, stood looking into the other's face.

"I hear you want to come down and stay with us, Louise," said Miss Dane, displaying in her clean-cut accent and her decided tones, the natural results of a mouth that was very firm. Her eyes, too, though she was seventy-one, were sharp and sparkling, as she turned them on the pretty, half-hard face before her.

"Now, don't say 'no,' dear, will you?" said Louise, the laughter still in her eyes, in reply. "I'll be awfully good, you know, if you'll let me—quite the Prodigal returned, in fact."

Miss Dane's lips tightened a little.

"Kindly do not make scriptural allusions in that flippant manner. You are not, I trust, Louise, a suffragette, or a futurist, or a feminist, or any of those awful creatures."

The laughter rippled onto Mrs. Manton's lips with a pleasant audibleness at the idea.

"A suffragette, Aunt Sarah? My God—no!"

Then quickly she caught herself and made a great *moue* at her naughty word.

"There, dear, I've shocked you nearly to

death by my vigor of language, haven't I?" she said. "But you'll forgive me, won't you? I'm really not half as bad as I seem. I know you know that."

The gray eyes were turned on her with a moment's weighing, the added keenness of their inspection being this time the only sign of mental disturbance in Miss Dane—if that were a sign. After a moment something appeared in them that caused the younger woman to lean forward quickly with a faint laugh and kiss again the thin lips, then to drop her hands from the elder's shoulders, and stand penitently before her.

"You'll let me come, won't you?" she added, with her head a little to one side, and her lips with a wee bit of pout in them. "Please do."

"I hope you won't stir us all up, Louise," Sarah Dane said reflectively. "You're almost as pretty as you used to be, I see—however, I trust you are not quite so foolish. Come, let us go out. Mortimer is always provoked if he is kept waiting for luncheon."

Lou Manton knew that her victory was won. A few minutes later she appeared at the din-

ing-room door with her arm linked in Miss Dane's. Mortimer Dane was standing by his chair, with a frown on his face.

"It is ten minutes past one," he said with acidity. "Mrs. Manton, this is my secretary, Mr. Calthrop."

A young man of about twenty-four, on the opposite side of the table from Dane, bowed to Mrs. Manton, and assisted Miss Dane as she took her seat. His face was open, his eyes were blue, his hair was light, and his whole presence seemed like a bit of sunshine in the frowning and rather huge dining-room. Lou caught a glimpse through the open windows of the bright fields rolling away in an easterly direction toward the sea, and it seemed to her that this youth went with them.

Yet, figuratively speaking, she shook her head apprehensively as she looked him over, saying to herself with a grim smile that he was altogether too good-looking to have about, and she must beware of danger.

Still, she had been successful beyond her dreams, and could afford to dismiss worry for

the moment—she that had dismissed so much! And so she smiled graciously on him as she sat down, and exclaimed:

"What a nice *partie carrée* we make!"

CHAPTER II

ALFRED DANE

ON the last day of June, Alfred Dane came home from college. His father had been up to hear him deliver his Commencement speech, for young Dane was indeed, as Mrs. Manton had said, a great scholar, and had been one of the four or five young men chosen by the University authorities to be exhibited as samples of the minds turned out by several years' training under their care. The essay had been entitled "The Modern Yearning for the Poetic," and its delivery and its subject-matter alike had made his father proud of him.

"I am not surprised, Alfred," said the latter, as the two were seated together that evening after dinner in the library, "that you chose for your subject the appeal of poetry. You take that taste from me, decidedly. You will be glad to know that I have my selections

for the 'Parnassus' now virtually completed through the poets of the Augustan Age. There is only the long home stretch to Claudian before me now."

"Is that so?" replied his son, who was a young man with a kindly, but dreamy eye. "I am looking forward to being of help to you now."

Alfred Dane had a pleasant voice, but he spoke slowly and softly, like a person who did not think that what he said could be of much importance to anybody—a frame of mind which comes often to those who have lived in books not wisely but too well.

"You will, indeed," replied the older man, taking his cigar out of his mouth in a nervous fashion, and hesitating before he added a qualifier to his statement, "after certain matters are attended to."

Alfred Dane caught the phrase and, coupling it with the hesitation, vaguely wondered what his father meant.

"Life is a hard affair, there is no use denying it," continued the elder, thinking it incumbent on him to break it to his son by means

of general reflections. "It has its duties, as well as its pleasures."

This did not mean very much to the young man,—for so far life had been all pleasures to him—although very innocent ones.

"Have you ever, Alfred," continued Mr. Dane, halting once or twice before he got out the sentence, but making a new start each time gallantly, "have you—have you ever thought of marriage?"

Such a question is enough to startle any young man of twenty-three. Not that any inner consciousness made Alfred Dane blush, however. He had thought of marriage, to be sure, but only as he had thought of death—as something to be expected in this world, but that need not trouble one very much for years to come.

"Not very seriously," he said, more amused than anything else, to think the subject was occupying his father's mind.

"You are wise," said his father. "I have often thought that if we could live without wives—"

Mr. Dane paused, as if the protasis of his

sentence had given him food for thought. Then after a moment of reflection, he shook his head vigorously.

"No," he said, with a touch of a sigh. "That cannot be. You will be rich some day, Alfred, and the necessity for such people as we, is, that they should hand their wealth on. You must have children."

This was a suggestion that really startled the young man.

"Do you understand me?" said his father, after he had taken a breath of his cigar, and removed it again from his mouth.

"Do you mean," said Alfred, similarly seeking to suck on his pipe, "that you wish me to marry?"

He looked at his father earnestly, for he had a touch of earnestness about him. One of his college friends had remarked that if ycu could convince Alfred Dane that it was his duty to be a rake, he would put all his soul into it.

"Oh, there is no hurry, my dear boy. Only with such a serious step ahead of one, it is well to prepare oneself. Do you know Schopenhauer on Women?"

"No, I believe I have never read the Essays."

"You will find them there in the corner. They quite express my own view. Women are worth studying, Alfred."

Alfred Dane was a great student of many things, but he had never thought of women in that light.

"My own conclusion about the possibility of a happy marriage is very well expressed in Schopenhauer's Essay. I might give it to you as a touchstone in your task. 'Women are by nature the sexus sequior, the second sex, and their duty is to be patient and cheerful companions to men.' I feel it my duty to tell you, however, that that is the last thing of which most of them are thinking."

For the first time in his life, probably, Alfred Dane was thinking of the opposite sex as an abstraction, and engaged in that to him strange occupation, he did not answer his father.

"You have not a very large feminine acquaintance, I take it, Alfred?" said his father.

"No," answered the young man more judiciously, looking up. "I have had little time to go into society, you know."

"Exactly. It is a bore. Still, I do not know but a certain amount of it is also a means of self-protection. My cousin Lou Manton is coming down to us to-morrow. I really had to invite her, but I dare say she may be a help to you. You've met her, I hear."

His son nodded.

"Her daughters?"

"I went once with Meg to a lecture at Cambridge."

"I see. Meg?—U-m. I fancy—"

Mr. Dane was silent, under the command of some inner behest.

"There is another daughter, Clare, I believe, who is, however, more frivolous. At any rate, all of them are coming down, and it will be a good opportunity for you to learn a little more of a creature which, you remember, Erasmus described as 'an absurd and ridiculous animal, though entertaining and pleasant.' I advise you to lose no opportunity while they

are here of studying women's ways, and if you decide on careful deliberation that either of these girls—"

Mr. Dane was going graciously to add that if Alfred decided that either of Mrs. Manton's girls would make him a patient and cheerful companion for life, he had no objections to his marrying her. He had been thinking over the subject thoroughly since that lady's rather disturbing visit to him, and had come to the conclusion that that was the best way out of the matter.

Although with a fair share of the Dane canniness in money matters, he would not have any objection to the poverty of his cousin's daughters. There was enough money and to spare. The Danes were nearly the richest people in New England and since the affair would be all in the family, it would really be an advantage to provide for one of the Manton girls.

He drew good augury for the girls' disposition from their mother's. He had been much pleased with her the day she had come down. He had found her singularly sympathetic and

docile, taking everything into consideration. Perhaps he had wronged women. He had not seen much of them these last years: perhaps they were more alive to their position as sexus sequior, less troublesome than he had supposed. At any rate he was prepared to believe that Lou Manton could be the mother of girls who would make cheerful and patient companions for their husbands.

Furthermore, here they were, brought as it were, to his very door! He never bought bonds when they were thus thrust at him, but perhaps with marriage it was different. Should Alfred choose one of them, they could get the affair over with and off their minds about as quickly as possible. From all points of view, in fact, he was favorably disposed toward the prospect, now that it had been brought to his attention.

And it was in accord with that good-will that he now checked himself just before uttering his permission. He would be diplomatic, he said to himself. Young men did not like to have girls thrown at them; they sometimes took a prejudice against such offers. Perhaps it

would be just as well if he did not put into words what he felt.

"They are coming down, you say, to-morrow?" said Alfred, after waiting awhile for his father to complete his sentence.

"Some time during the day—I don't know just when. Very likely your aunt does. I hope you will like Mrs. Manton."

"She seemed a very agreeable woman to me."

"I thought so too. By the way, I noticed one thing in your essay, Alfred, with which I could not quite agree. I cannot bring myself to think of Kipling as the most insular of poets."

Alfred Dane's face lighted up with the joy of debate. He had had enough of the woman question just then—he had even found it a trifle embarrassing.

"I know it isn't a common impression," he said with enthusiasm, springing from his chair. "But where do you keep 'The Five Nations' now—let me read you 'Sussex.' "

The conversation wandered off into fields more interesting to father and son at that mo-

ment, but not so germane to the progress of various events that already on that evening were shaping their course.

Mrs. Manton would probably not be down till toward evening, Alfred discovered from his Aunt Sarah, the next morning, and with a whole day before him, he decided to take a long walk through the country. He was a great pedestrian and very fond of the region about Downham, of which in the last few years he had had chance to see comparatively little, particularly in summer. He therefore, after breakfast, took his stick and went out the door.

On the terrace he found Roger Calthrop smoking an after-breakfast cigarette.

"Can't you come too, Roger?" he asked. "I'm strolling over to Bromesgrove."

"Thanks," said Calthrop, shaking his head, "this is going to be a busy morning with us—the last one before trouble begins, your father thinks. Can't do it."

"Ever seen my cousins?" said Alfred, pausing a minute—for the subject had begun to interest him.

"Mrs. Manton lunched here a few weeks ago, you know. A very taking woman."

"I mean Clare, Roger."

"No."

"Neither have I."

He stood with his brow knit in thought, wanting to take Calthrop into his confidence on various things he was thinking, but deciding that somehow it was not the thing to do. Finally he nodded to him and took up his walk.

"Sorry you can't go, Roger. So long."

Calthrop stood looking after him as Dane passed down the hill, hands in his pockets and stick under his arm, and then with a little tightening of the lips, turned on his heel and entered the house, where he knew Mortimer Dane would be soon coming for him.

He envied his friend the liberty that morning to be wandering over the fair summer landscape, and for the first time in his life he felt a deeper envy also toward him. For he was poor and without certain prospect in life, while Dane had everything the heart could desire before him; and Roger Calthrop, feeling himself a better man than Dane in every ability he re-

garded, experienced just for a moment a jealousy he had never in his rather manly nature known before.

Meanwhile Alfred Dane struck out northward. Essex is not particularly hilly, and the typical scenery of that part of the country in which Downham is situated is, on the one hand, fields rolling up and down, divided from one another by fringes of walnuts or oaks along the walls and brooks, and here and there broken up with a bit of wood; and on the other—nearer the ocean—long, never-ending stretches of marshland, dotted over with stackles to receive the hay. The road along which Dane made ran through surroundings of the former character.

The country had a pleasant mingling of the familiar and the new to him, for it was in that part of Essex which has been more and more seized upon for considerable estates by Boston, New York, and Washington people, and he was rather impressed to observe the different sorts of country-houses that had been added to the landscape in the last two or three years.

"There must be a great many new people about here," he thought to himself, as a touch of human wonder as to who could be the inhabitants of all these abodes came over him. "Rather odd that I know the names of hardly any of them—except for the Downham people. We Danes seem to keep a good deal to ourselves."

He came about noon to the small town of Bromesgrove—half mills, half residential—and remembering that as a boy he had sometimes hired boats on the Bromesgrove River, he wandered down through the shabby streets to the river bank. The old establishment was still there, and the result was that fifteen minutes later, he was seated in the stern of a canoe, a lunch in his pocket, beginning to paddle up the stream. It seemed to him appropriate to his mood that he should make a day of it by himself, and not get back to Downham till evening.

Now there is nothing more delightful in the world than to be in a canoe on one of those smooth-flowing streams that in all lands seem

to woo the heart as the loveliest expression of Nature. It was blazing hot, of course, at that hour of the day, but Dane knew that before long the Bromesgrove would run into the woods, and there would be shade enough. Accordingly he pulled off his coat and with a right good will used his paddle, so that soon he had passed beyond sight of the rows of mill-houses, rounded a curve or two of the meadows and got his canoe up to the picturesque stretch of the stream. There after a while he tied his canoe to the root of an oak on the bank, and ate the frugal provisions he had bought at Bromesgrove; then again in a leisurely fashion set out to paddle along up against the slow current.

For canoeing, the narrower the stream the better, particularly on a hot July day. The Bromesgrove is happily attenuated in this respect, and it was only occasionally that on one bank or the other, there were not enough trees to give Dane a sense of coolness and shelter. And it seemed to him as he went on, slowly dipping his paddle into the water when the

impulse seized him, and always drinking in the scenery about him, very charming that he should be there.

For some reason, too, life at the moment seemed to him of a little different quality from what it had ever been before.

Perhaps it was because he was now at last through his studies, and his mind was released from interests that had long and absorbingly held him. Or possibly it was the indirect result of the conversation he had had with his father the previous evening. At any rate he was more human at that moment than, young man that he was, he had up to this time been. A vague craving for something not expressed, but beautiful, something in harmony with the scene about him, held Alfred, and made his spirits high and his heart jubilant with all he saw.

Consciously at least, it was not a mood of romance. As far as he was aware, he would have said, if he had been questioned and had analyzed honestly his thoughts, his father's remarks the night before had only amused and interested him. But very likely, though he

did not know it, they had touched a side of his nature that was all ready to spring into life. At any rate, he knew only—or perhaps he did not know even that—that to be there, alone, in the stillness, with only the soft scrape of the canoe's bottom on the lily pads, as he pushed forward into ever-fresh scenes of silver and rich green, was very good, and that he was somehow just then especially enjoying the world.

Generally speaking, there is, mixed up in such a mood—our love for life being like our gratitude "a lively sense of favors to come"—a feeling that the world is going to do something for us—something momentous and very happy. It was so with Alfred Dane—this glad though indistinct sense was part of the feeling that was pulsing through his veins and making his heart beat joyously within him.

And it so chanced that the world *was* going to do something for him, and that very soon.

Alfred had gone about a mile above his lunching place, when in making round an elbow in the stream, across which a gust of wind swept down at the moment, he caught sight

of an empty canoe—neat, shipshape, and bright with cushions and new paint—floating down around the corner to him.

"Hullo!" he cried, some premonition of his coming adventure seizing him, and starting his pulse. "That is a rather pretty boat which has broken loose from somewhere. I will pick it up and see what I discover."

He intercepted the absconding canoe, and fastened it by its tie-rope to the end of his own. Then he proceeded on his way up stream, perhaps a little more strenuously and purposefully than before.

The Bromesgrove is a winding river, full of more or less sudden twists and turns, and at the very next one above, Fate jumped lightly into the canoe beside Alfred Dane and took command of things. Suddenly, as he paddled around the inside bank, close in shore, he found himself looking into the eyes of a girl who stood on the bank.

Yes, he was literally looking into her eyes—for from the very first, her eyes charmed him. Alfred did not know that fact, of course, for the last thing in the world of which he was

capable was of analyzing feminine features. But nevertheless, a pair of the deepest, softest, loveliest brown eyes that ever drew the heart of a man up into his throat, it was, which made the blood rush to his cheeks.

He had come quite unexpectedly on her. She was standing at the end of a path that came down to the stream through a shiny beech wood, and though the expression on her face when she saw the canoe at once proclaimed it hers, she too had not expected to see anyone so close at hand, and was a trifle startled.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "you have found my canoe."

Her voice sounded to him low and sweet.

"Yes," said Dane, who was shy enough to feel that the ordinary business of life must be conducted all the more formally because he was excited. "I picked it up below the last bend."

"It is too bad to have troubled you," she said, raising her eyes again to his. "I pulled it up, I thought, securely when I went to get these flowers but the wind came up suddenly and worked it off."

For the first time then he said to himself that she was fearfully pretty. It was perhaps the first time in his life too that he had made such a judgment of any girl.

As she spoke she had motioned to a bunch of yellow daisies on the ground beside her, and it flashed over Dane at the same moment that they were the most beautiful flower in the world.

"It was no trouble whatever," he said, looking directly at her, and unconsciously trying to attract her eyes to his. "I will push it in for you."

He pulled the rope up behind him, unfastened the other canoe, and shoved it in towards the shore. The girl reached forward and drew it in. Then she looked with rather a perplexed air about her.

Dane's eyes, perhaps in tune with the tumult of his heart, had become rather keener than they usually were.

"Have you lost your paddle?" he asked restrainedly, and yet with that tumult becoming just a little more throbbing and happy still.

A slight tinge of pink came over the girl's

cheeks. She had, by the way, the clearest, loveliest, most perfect skin—so clear that the dark hair just faintly—delightfully—shaded the lip. She met his eyes for a second affirmatively, and then the long lashes fell over them.

"I fear I was careless, like all girls," she said softly, with a little laugh.

Oh, how beautiful life was!—thought, or rather sang, Alfred to himself. Oh, with what overflowing kindness fate was at that moment treating him!

Yet he was embarrassed to know how to make his move.

"If you—if there is anywhere I can take you—"

Brown Eyes, in spite of their diffidence, had very much liked the glimpses they had got of the boy—for he was little more—in the canoe, and to the mind behind them in turn the moment was not by any means an unpleasant one. Yet she was naïvely, sincerely shy, and she could not look at him without another slight blush. However, it was neither the reticence of fear, nor of dislike.

"I live on the other bank a half mile up,"

she said with a laugh, "and there is no bridge till you get back to town, you know."

Something—Destiny, Cupid, nature; call it what you will—had been with the two already for some sixty seconds, giving them a willingness and courage neither one could have counted on in ordinary times, and dissolving the reluctance that could not help starting up in both minds into a soft allurement that only urged them the more on. Already Dane had run the bow of his canoe into the shore.

"If you will get in, I can easily take you up," he said. "Perhaps you would like to paddle, too."

"And you are sure that it will not be taking you out of your way?" she said, smiling and looking at him again for the briefest and charmingest second.

Had his intellect—which was very insufficient as yet in such matters—been able to work, he would have wondered much and long at all the play of eyes that was going on between them, and at the fact that he could take his part in it so eagerly.

"Yes," said he, smiling at her in his turn. "Quite sure."

The girl laughed a little again, and then stepped into the canoe, seating herself on the forward seat and helping with her paddle to push off from the bank. Already her canoe Alfred had attached to his own.

Somehow it had never occurred to these two virginal souls, round whom Love was holding his protecting mantle, that Dane might easily have loaned her one of his two paddles—directing her to get it back to Mrs. Goodrich's boat-letting establishment in the village—wherewith to work out her destiny in her own canoe. Ah, no! Love would never have permitted that!

And there they were in the boat together.

"How lovely it is here!" she offered when they were fairly off. "Do you know the river well?"

"I used to, when I was a boy," replied Alfred.

A touch of soft laughter came to him over the girl's shoulder.

"That must have been so long ago," she said.

He laughed with sheer delight and happiness, more and more content with each moment. She could jest, it seemed!

"Well, I mean I haven't been on it much for four or five years now. It is certainly beautiful."

He was sorry now that he had suggested that she should paddle. When he had spoken, he had had a vague idea that the suggestion was the decent one on his part to make, that it would be somehow more conventional, easier for her. But her taking it meant that she sat with her back turned toward him, and that he was deprived of the sight of her glorious, melting eyes. If only he had not suggested it, perhaps she would have placed herself on the cushion in the middle of the boat, face to face!

Still, it was but a small matter to complain of. There she was, but a few feet from him; his eyes could linger on her rounded arms with the sleeves rolled up above the elbows, or catch her soft, dark chestnut hair shining against the satin fairness of her neck. And once or twice she turned, and he saw the high

altar of beauty, to which these other charms were but the approaches.

"I have known it only this year," said the girl, "and I am in love with it."

"Only this year?" Who and what was she? Under his excitement and his delight, he was wondering eagerly about her. She was a newcomer evidently in the region about Bromesgrove.

"I have known it as long as I can remember," he repeated, with that same outward formality which he used to cover his excitement. "My home is a few miles from here, and as a boy I used to come over often."

She in her turn was wondering about him, and yet softly laughing at herself for so doing. What a rather equivocal situation it was! But the pleasantness of it was by no means to be doubted!

"Isn't it rather funny," she threw over her shoulder a little more boldly, "your taking me in your canoe, when we don't know each other at all?"

He laughed with added pleasure at the knowledge that she was thinking with him

of their little wickedness of the moment. It occurred to him that he might say something then—tell his name, or ask her for hers—that would put things on a more conventional basis. Ah, but that was not what he wanted, his soul at once came forward to assure him. To do it somehow would be to break the charm that was over everything at the moment.

"I hope you don't mind at all," he answered her instead, eagerly, apprehensively, entreatingly.

His tone gave her a little thrill. To all her young girl's craving for the mysterious, wonderful beauty of life and for possible emotion with one who rather appealed to her, the moment was calling. Yet she was wholesome and sane enough to guard herself with humor and reserve against the mocking of such things. She had been wondering curiously just a second before if he liked her. But now she no longer wondered, for in his tone, something had sounded, telling her woman's heart that he was sincerely and eagerly desirous for her approval. And, womanlike, under the influence of it,

she did something of which she was half ashamed.

She turned round and as she shook her head, laughingly gave him all the soft, deep beauty of her eyes.

"No," she said, looking directly at him. "I'm only thinking how very nice it is of you."

Once her face was around forward again and he could not see her, she blushed.

"I haven't the slightest idea even of his name," she thought, a little guiltily and frightened. "I must not do that again."

She might well have felt frightened, could she have known what was the effect of the moment on the boy behind her. He had looked very seldom into girls' eyes before, and perhaps he was not as prepared as he ought to have been to estimate them at their true value. But he did not know that fact, you see, and they were very lovely and true eyes anyway, and so he felt a lump rising in his throat, and something like a delicious faintness stealing over him, and he had to be silent a few seconds in his silly young self before he could make

his almost stilted reply. But it seemed to him nevertheless that round and above and everywhere surrounding him shot at that moment the dazzling sunshine of the world that the great beneficent God had made.

"Please believe me," he said. "It is a great pleasure for me to do it."

Then he was silent again, and so, too, was Brown Eyes forward.

The next thing that either of them said was his inquiry how far up the stream her home was.

"I believe," said she, with a little laugh, "that you already repent of your bargain to carry me home."

"By no means," said Alfred, quite alarmed. "I was simply curious to place you a little."

The girl laughed faintly again.

"We bought the old Warren place, if you know it, around the next bend. The house has been torn down and we have put up a new one, but the garden is the same."

"Yes," said Alfred, "I think I know."

He was wondering to himself if he did know. By his last remark, he had made a little offer

for her name, and evidently she did not want to give it. If she had, she could easily have done so.

"I was trying unfairly to take advantage of circumstances," he thought to himself guiltily, "and it is a just rebuke that she has administered to me. She evidently wants to keep me to impersonalities."

He had *not* been rebuked; but in his awkwardness he thought that he had, and accordingly once more he was silent. Perhaps it was better so; surely, the charm of the hour was not less apparent to them. The canoe glided on softly between the sinuous banks of the river, with the hot, hazy July sunshine on every side. Glided on slowly—for neither paddle wanted much to bring it to its destination; glided on lingeringly, as golden moments, never to be repeated, sometimes—alas! too seldom in this world—do glide; but yet surely at last to the garden coming down to the stream from a large new colonial-looking house further back on the slope which Brown Eyes indicated as her home.

"I am ever so grateful to you," she said,

standing on a landing when she had tied her own canoe to a post. "I was very careless, I am ready to confess, but you have rescued me so nicely, I am by no means sorry I was."

She was feeling very sorry, for it seemed to her that something sweet was over, and she could not forbear—quite, or almost, unconsciously this time—holding him just a second with her eyes.

Again Alfred Dane's heart was pulsing overpoweringly.

"Don't you think—" he began, spurred to a point of boldness he would never have expected to reach.

His face grew pink, and the words faltered for a second on his tongue.

Yet their eyes were meeting again.

"You could tell me your name?" he breathed out slowly, almost in a whisper. "Mine is Alfred Dane."

A faint flush passed across the loveliness of her cheeks. Her heart was throbbing violently too, but the instinct of her sex aided her successfully to conceal the fact. For the first

time, her eyes vaguely mocked him, distinctly, appraisingly.

"You must find out," she said, gravely.

A second's hesitation on her part too, and then teasingly, lingeringly, as though hypnotized herself by the sound, she added:

"You must find out—Alfred Dane."

A laugh broke from her lips with the last words, and half frightened, she nodded, turned and ran up the garden.

Oh, what beauty there was to the stream in those next few minutes, as Alfred Dane drove his canoe back down it. Life was of wine, on wings, of heaven to him. Every second was hers, her dark eyes coming back and looking into his, her low sweet voice, her ways of graceful charm, her cheek like the petal of a fair blush rose, and all the mystery and allurement of their meeting about her. Intoxicating beauty she gave to everything he saw and heard and felt—to the song of the birds flitting along the banks and across the stream; to the dark, sun-embroidered shadows of the woods that lured his eyes within; to the smell

of flowers everywhere on the bank, and of the new-mown hay that here and there was blown to him; to the stream itself, and to the beautiful, far New England landscape beyond; to the day and to days to come; to the home towns he was back in, and to life and thought and love! Why had he never known, he thought, that man could be so happy, why had he never felt this unutterable sweetness before? He sang, he whistled, he kept stroke with his paddle to the song of infinite life that was pulsing through his veins. And ever and again with a laugh, he would say over to himself her words, "You must find out, Alfred Dane," and his mind would leap to bright pictures of a still greater glory that was to be in the future. "Find it out?" ah, that he would, and ere many hours should go by too!

Very likely—to come down to soberer facts—Alfred Dane's previous absorption in studious things had kept him from sufficiently protecting himself against the danger of falling in love at sight with a pretty girl. At any rate he was for the moment quite out of his senses with excitement, and was hardly able to recog-

nize the world as the same rather slow-going, though dependable place he had known an hour or so earlier. The only direction in fact in which his brain would work with at all decent soberness was that of making plans to carry out his young lady's injunction. As to that, it must be stated, he was quite clear-minded.

The house where he had left her, he knew, was situated on the road back to Downham, and would be recognizable to his anointed eyes, surely, from any angle it might present to the highway. It was, besides, "the old Warren place"—a concrete fact whereon to base inquiries. With such clues in his hand, he felt it would be strange if within another half hour, he did not have some definite knowledge about its occupants. The final goal of such knowledge—to meet Her again—he did not worry about. It was enough that he was going again into the very shadow of her presence. Fortune, that had been so kind and generous, would look after the rest.

With the unswerving, remorseless decision of a person who is under the spell of a single, all-controlling thought, Alfred reached the

boat-house, paid for his canoe, and struck out through the town back in the direction from which he had just come. As it took him but a modicum of the time he had consumed by water to cover the distance, he was very soon drawing up alongside of the big white house, already caught sight of over the fields, every step toward which cost him a throb of emotion mingled of ecstasy and fear.

But just then a further happening put the finishing touch on his day.

With pulse beating high, he had stopped a second to gaze across the rich July landscape to that redolent mansion, when he became aware that an automobile which had just run past him and to which in the isolation of his emotion he had paid no attention, had come to a stop a dozen yards ahead.

"Hullo, Dane;" cried the driver, who was sharply turning round and scrutinizing him, "how under the sun do you happen to be around here?"

Alfred, startled out of his dreams, looked up. Suddenly a sense of annoyance passed over him. The man in the car he seemed to

recognize as a fellow two or three years ahead of him at Harvard whom he had known slightly, and who had the reputation of being rather a bounder; and it came over him that the meeting was going to be very much of an interference now. Still, he could not be uncivil.

"How d'ye do, Fearing," he replied, stepping forward and shaking hands with the man. "I might ask the same question of you."

"Why, I live in here, old man," said the other, throwing a sharp glance at Alfred's face, and bethinking himself keenly how he might turn the meeting to advantage.

He noticed as he spoke that a change of expression passed over the face of the man standing in front of him, but he attributed it to quite other causes than the fact that with his hand he had just made a gesture of indication toward the very white house that had been absorbing Alfred's attention.

"In there?" echoed Alfred, awe-struck, incredulous, frightened.

"Sure thing," said the other, smiling. "Hop in and let me drive you up for a bit."

For a moment the blood seemed to desert Alfred's heart. Goal of all his thoughts as a moment before it had been to meet Her again, this offering of Fortune was so sudden that it made him draw back almost in terror.

"I hardly think—" he began, an intense shyness now springing up in him and fighting with an equally intense desire.

"Rather stiffish, eh?" thought Fearing to himself, losing no touch of what was going on before him. "Still, I'll wager I'll fix him—such pieces of luck as this meeting don't happen every day, and if I'm clever there'll be more in it too. They used to say that he was an awful ass, so he ought to be easy. Still, I must be careful."

"My dear fellow," he said aloud in answer to Alfred's hesitation, putting on at the same time a very kindly, good-will-to-all-men smile he was cultivating. "I do hope, if you can, you will drop in on us for a moment. We are new-comers here, and it isn't often we catch even an acquaintance at our very gates. I fear there is only my sister at home, but we shall be so glad if you will let us give you a

cup of tea—or something stronger, if you like."

He looked with an almost deferential appeal at Alfred, little surmising, sharp fellow though he was, that the fate of his offer was being decided on quite other grounds than those he was holding forth. A glow of indescribably sweet, though fearful ecstasy had passed over Alfred at Fearing's last words, his heart had throbbed, it seemed to him almost audibly, and for a second a great wave of the shyness that held him, passed over him. The next, he had stepped up to the seat beside Fearing, forced there, it almost seemed, by some power stronger than himself.

"I shall be glad to do so," he said in a low tone, as Fearing threw in his engine. "I had no idea that you lived about here."

"Of course not," said Fearing, throwing himself a brief mental congratulation, and not now observing Alfred's perturbation. "You know we've only had our shack up since last summer, so why should you? It's bully though, my running across you here. Let's see, you live over Downham way, don't you?"

Fred Fearing knew very well where Dane

lived. The first thought that had flashed through his mind when he had recognized him had been that here was a member of the leading family of the region whom it would be extremely advantageous to become intimate with —a member of that family whose imposing houses at Downham he was continually passing by in his car or by train, and wishing with all his strong, aspiring desire that he might know the Olympian occupants thereof. Already now his brain was keenly at work making plans toward that end.

"Yes," replied Alfred, all of whose being was in its turn in an excited condition. "I live over there."

His excitement was not decreased by Fearing's next remark. The runabout had swung through the portals of the gate and was sliding fast along the drive toward the house.

"Hullo," cried the driver of the car, in the tone he was fast making his own, "there's Phyllis, old girl, on the piazza now. I'll leave you in her hands for a moment, if you don't mind, while I run the car into the garage."

To his own surprise, a faint laugh, silent, unheard by anyone but himself, shot through Alfred Dane's heart. His intense timidity seemed to roll away, and an intoxicating joy took possession of him. He could even, to his own wonder, jest a little.

"No, I don't mind," he said, soberly.

The house to which his eyes were directed was new, and looked so, but the builders had had the good sense to place it under the shade of a couple of great elm trees which threw their cooling shadow over it as embracingly as if it were contemporaneous. The piazza was broad, low, and furnished with many deep-cushioned chairs, and from one of these rose as the runabout drew up at the steps the girl whom Alfred had left an hour earlier at the river landing.

In Phyllis Fearing's heart at that second was some embarrassment, and on her cheeks was a faint touch of pink. Yet the interest of the moment was certain, and there was a bit of sweetness about it of which even she was not quite conscious. Her pulse had begun to throb very violently, when she spied the car

coming up the drive, and had recognized the person beside her brother. She was wondering too.

"Hullo, Phil," called Fearing, as she came forward and the car drew up to the steps. "I want to present Mr. Dane to you. Look after him a minute, will you, while I put the car up. I'll be back in a couple of minutes."

Alfred Dane stepped boldly out onto the steps, Fearing, fortunately intent on starting the car again, not taking the chance to put his keen eyes on the momentous encounter that at that moment was before him. He had been tempted to try to signal Phyllis some sense of the importance of the man he introduced to her, but had concluded he had better not. If she did not place him herself, it would be better to let matters take their own course. Phyllis was queer about some things!

Nevertheless he remarked to himself what a pretty face she had. He was counting a good deal on her in the plans that were already beginning to shape themselves in his mind! The world seemed very promising to him as he disappeared in the car round the house.

For one second neither of the two persons left face to face on the piazza spoke. In the girl's heart was a great eagerness to know this man better, to get as quickly as possible back to the point where he had spoken to her as he had once thrillingly in the canoe. But it was an eagerness that brought a shyness with it, and for one second she looked away instead of meeting his look. The next, command of the situation came to her, and she turned her glorious eyes to his.

"I'm glad at last to know you, Mr. Dane," she said, with a faint laugh.

Through Alfred Dane's veins ran a shudder of delight. Afterwards, he wondered that he could speak, that his throat was not parched, that his lips were not halted by his emotions. But speak he did, half-mockingly, but for the first time in his life perhaps, firmly and insistently.

"You know," he said quietly, seeming to look into the depths of her soul, "you told me to do it—Phyllis Fearing."

Her laugh was quenched, the blood rushed to her cheeks, and her eyes were dominated by

his. There was something in his tone that she had never heard before, and her own soul so felt itself suddenly respond to the power that for an instant they stood there, man and woman, looking into each other's nature, without any embarrassment.

Then lest the patience of the gods be too long tested, her woman's presence of mind came to her again, and a laugh—sure, sweet, emotional, yet truly restorative—broke from her lips. Her eyes flashed and sparkled, as seldom even her eyes had flashed or sparkled, and her heart throbbed with a sweet sense of power and comprehension.

"Since everything is all right at last," she said, "don't you want—Mr. Dane—to shake hands? I think it would be a very fitting celebration of our meeting. Then come over here and take one of these nice chairs—you look decidedly hot."

The last words were a little bit of feminine reprisal for the embarrassment of which she had just been guilty.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY OF A KISS

"I WONDER if you've got any heart at all, Mother."

"There's nothing a woman enjoys having more, Clare—when she can afford it," said Mrs. Manton pointedly.

"Don't worry—you make yourself very clear," replied the young girl with the clear, gray eyes, who sat leaning back on the couch, looking over at the older woman. "I get my directions quite plainly. I was only wondering about you."

"I wouldn't talk so to you, of course, if I didn't know you were clever. It's after all very much of a compliment."

"I wonder if I really am," said the girl, looking off into the distance. "I don't believe you realize how clearly I remember Father."

The two were pretty close in spirit, to each

other, and a word from one of them was usually enough to convey a paragraph to the other.

"That's right," said Lou Manton coolly. "Of course I like to have you *remember* him."

She emphasized the word with meaning.

Clare's eyes met her mother's with a flash of curiosity.

"Sometimes," she said, following out what she knew was in her mother's thought, "I think I'm more like him than like you. Sometimes I think I have it in me to do something foolish."

Her mother shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly.

"It's the sort of romantic fancy girls like to have, dear. Keep it by all means. I don't worry. You're a Dane through and through when it comes to facts."

Clare Manton smiled and shook her head slowly and doubtfully back and forth.

"There's something in what you say. Still, I don't believe you quite know me."

"I know you are a cleverer girl than I was at your age. Not quite so pretty—I had the Dane light hair and it curled, and you have

your father's—but you've got better brains than I ever had, and you're equal to anything."

"And yet you married just the sort of man you'd kill me for taking," threw out Clare, again anxious for a real answer.

"Yes, I did, my dear," said her mother sharply, "and that's the very reason why you won't. I'd been rich and you've been poor, and poverty's a very different thing, let me tell you, when you've seen it face to face from what it is when you haven't. Haven't you had enough of it, Clare?"

"You're very clever, Mother," nodded the girl with a faint smile on her lips. "I haven't the slightest doubt you'll get me to do just what you wish, in the long run. You know exactly how to do it."

"I'll get you to do what you want to do yourself, that's all. There isn't anything very pleasant about three thousand a year, you know. And half of it I've been paying out the last few years for your school. I've counted so on you, Clare."

A sobered look fell over the girl's face.

"Meg?" she said, interrogatively.

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"Meg's line's wholly different from yours, dear. I've done the best I could for her, of course, but it's you I look to. Meg'll support herself very respectably if it comes to that, but—well, I had Alfred over and he and she were quite indifferent, you could see. They're too near alike. Besides, he's a fellow you've got to pick off the bush for yourself and Meg's not equal to that."

"You leave no vagueness about the objective point of the campaign, Mother. Poor Alfred Dane!"

"I told you I was complimenting you by talking so frankly. If you were any other girl, propinquity and love of being loved would do the business. As for you, it's much wiser to remind you that you have a fairly pretty face, an unusually good figure—"

"Aren't you afraid of making me self-conscious?" yawned Clare, throwing her hands back over her head and clasping them there.

"Was it a half or a whole hour that I saw you before your mirror yesterday?" said Lou Manton, smiling faintly.

"I rather think you're right about my fig-

ure," said the girl reflectively. "The girls at Durfee's used to speak of it."

"You have also unusual poise for your age, Clare."

"Is he an awful stupid, Mother?"

"Alfred? Oh, I don't believe he'll break your heart, as far as that goes."

"Poor fellow. And yet he is to be my prey. Why is it, I've always somehow known it? Have you been sowing good seed in my mind all this time?"

Lou Manton smiled sympathetically.

"It was the obvious thing, dear. I soon saw that Meg was rather impossible. She's really interested in books, you know. And of course the thing to do was to get us back somehow to my people."

Neither spoke for a couple of minutes. One could have guessed something of the daughter's personal reaction on whatever train of thought she was following, by a glance in her at the two mobile features of mankind—eyes and mouth. The former in Clare Manton were soft and youthful, the latter was mature and firm. Her gray eyes flashed keenly

enough when she was talking, but in repose they impressed one as a dreamer's. Her lips, on the contrary, though almost sensuously pink and pretty, at all times suggested determination. As for the rest, her nose had a touch of the Roman, her hair stopped just short of being black, and she joined a poor complexion with exquisite teeth. If ill-natured friends, however, found a reason in this last combination why Clare cultivated vivacity, they were totally wide of the mark, for the girl's obvious charm was her life. You were in doubt sometimes of her prettiness, but never of the one supreme feminine prize. She had a perfect body, strong desires, a superficial sort of selfishness, and a somewhat precocious realization of the facts of life,—the last developed in her by a mother who thought she valued the solid satisfactions of the world more highly for her daughters than for herself. The girl had enough temperamental sympathy with her mother to receive her suggestions easily, and a keen enough mind to see their foundation, and the result was a frank facing of the world that would have been disastrous in any young

person who had not abundant health, a subtile sense that she was the center of any scene she formed part of, and an instinctive counting on the future that no one at twenty can quite lose, to fall back upon. As it was, Clare Manton had a perfect and somewhat cynical mastery of life, without ever having had a chance quite to lose either her enjoyment or her faith in it.

Probably just now both women were thinking of much the same thing. Lou Manton had taken enough pains at any rate to throw the right light on her own history for her daughter's benefit, so that she felt she could count on the proper train of thought going through the girl's mind whenever she turned on the switch. And she had just turned it now.

The train of family history which had made possible mother and daughter, sitting there looking out into the narrow lane between their apartment house in Brookline and its neighbor, was this:

As Lou Manton had remarked to Mortimer Dane, they were cousins. Her maternal grandfather, Charles Dane, had been brother

of the second Mortimer Dane, who had done most to pile up the Crœsus fortune now belonging to his grandchildren living down at Downham, but Charles Dane had come in for enough of his brother's prosperity to get together a million or so which should by rights have belonged to Lou Manton at that moment. The old man had been living, however, when she had married Jack Manton, and not liking her choice, had left his money to her mother —Lou had been the daughter of Mason Petersham, the broker, who had gone to smash a trifle before his father-in-law's death—for life only. Of seventy-five thousand dollars he had made a trust, the income only of which was to be paid Mrs. Manton during her life. The rest of his property at the death of the Petershams, had been divided up among various religious and philanthropic institutions in which the Dane family were hereditarily interested.

Jack Manton had been a genius. An architect by profession, he had come back to this country after his years at the Beaux Arts, and hit off one or two minor things in his profession delightfully. However, he had not

had the staying power. Old Charles Dane had thought that the fellow—who was utterly beyond his comprehension and whom he cordially disliked—was lazy, and counted on fattening on his money. But the truth was, Jack Manton did not care at all for money except at just the moment when it was needed to gratify some desire. There was no doubt he was a rake—although Lou Manton after she married him, was clever enough to keep him all but to herself—but it was not giving the devil his due to accuse him of anything mercenary—except as all rakes are mercenary. He was a handsome, charming, good-natured fellow who liked everything beautiful and easy-going and cordial in life, and saw no reason why he should not have what he liked; and after he had got into the way of living on the standard of his early successes which somehow he could not repeat, he departed out of the world in an attack of typhoid fever at the age of thirty-seven, after having accomplished some active but more passive harm.

His widow had continued to live for the ten years since his death, the rather Bohemian life

to which her husband had introduced her, wavering between Boston, New York, and Europe as her fancies and her small income had dictated. But the Dane strain in her was by no means erased, and as her two daughters came on, she found it influencing her more and more.

"In some ways, it's hard to think of you as a martyr, Mother," said Clare after a while.

"Because I get what fun I can out of life meanwhile, it doesn't follow that I haven't any ambitions to gratify, my dear."

"I wonder how it would be if the choice ever came to me. I'm fearfully fond of myself, I fancy."

"You can't complain I haven't pointed out an easy path before you, then."

"Rather strange I've never set eyes on cousin Alfie. Is he hopeless looking?"

"There's a good deal in freshness of impression on men, Clare, I've always found. It's just as well you should have been away at school the four years he has been at Cambridge after all—you'll rather overpower him, I'm counting. Oh, no, he's very presentable in

looks—you can make a good deal of him, I've no doubt."

"You'll make a mistake if you thrust him too much on me, Mother. I have my dreams too, you know. Who else is there?"

Mrs. Manton named over the various digits making up the select group of her relatives at Downham, setting them out with such phrase as popped into her pretty head. Her cousin Morty was a selfish fool that deserved to fall into some woman's clutches who would lead him a life; Aunt Sarah was a dear old sport, who was also a wee bit of a hypocrite; Alfred Dane was rather a stick; and Dick, down at the parsonage—well, she did not know what Dick had become. Clare was not particularly interested, however, for like most strong and self-centered people, she had enough inner interests to keep anything not of the moment from getting far into her mind.

"Heigho," she said at the end. "Quite a menagerie, isn't it? So you think I'd better lead the march down to-morrow."

"Men don't like to see women in hordes—particularly the old-fashioned "pasha" type of

men they are down at Downham—they think we look better when we come one at a time. I'm rather counting on your sweeping him off his feet, you see. No, you had better plan to arrive directly after luncheon, and Meg and I will turn up in time for dinner. That will give you the field to yourself for a while. I hope Sarah Dane is going to give me a maid to myself. One for me and one for you girls would be the generous thing. Thank Heaven, we're long on clothes just now!"

"Well, we'll see, Mother. I won't promise you anything. Don't be disappointed—"

"Don't you be a silly goose, you mean, Clare," laughed the older woman, jumping up and running over to wind her arms about her daughter's waist. "I know you through and through, and what all your little talking means. Come, we've got to do our packing, if we're going to be in decent shape to-morrow. Then on to victory!"

The next day about three o'clock—the day and very nearly the hour, by the way, when Alfred Dane was having his adventure with

Phyllis Fearing—Clare Manton stood on the platform of the station at Downham. The bus from Mortimer Dane's had been there a few minutes earlier, the station-master was telling her, to meet the express on which everybody came. Hers was the very slow train of which most Downham people hardly knew, and apparently the carriage had not waited.

"If you will tell me the general direction," she said, "I believe I will walk."

"What ripping fun," she laughed to herself, the next moment, as she struck off along the road. "Much more so than driving up in state. Quite unconventional, too. I wonder if that isn't my rôle, anyway?"

The station-master had told her to inquire her way farther on, and as luck would have it and to her delight, her first question enabled her to leave the dusty road and to strike off across a footpath. Like all full, free natures, she loved the green country, and not having had any too much of it lately, was at once exuberant at her surroundings.

"Follow the path till it crosses the brook, then take the right-hand one for a quarter of

a mile to the orchard, which will bring me out at the top of the hill at Morty Dane's garden," she repeated to herself, swinging along. "Isn't it be-utiful, and isn't Morty a funny name for a man of fifty, and isn't everything too nice for anything. What a place and what an hour and, lastly, what a girl, Clare Manton, for an adventure. Don't you feel just in a mood for one. But, oh, he must be handsome, divinely handsome—"

The adventure was nearer and more momentous than Clare Manton thought. She sat down on a stone after a few minutes to let her soul drink in the beauty of the scene in front. The path led along the edge of a series of mixed meadows and pastures, bounded ahead of her by the hilly orchard which she had been directed to climb before reaching her destination. In the soft green of the season, the usually rather bare aspect of the wind-swept Essex scenery was transformed. The islands of trees dotting the wide stretches of fields seemed thicker and richer than their stunted growth would usually have shown, and the path she was following between lines of birches

and alders stretched ahead of her full of mysterious and romantic shadows. Farther along in the pasture, a herd of Jerseys were feeding.

"I wonder what makes me so happy," she said, as she woke up from the reveries where she had been since she had seated herself. "Still, I don't wonder at all—it's being out in the country again. Isn't it going to be glorious?"

She got up and walked on, singing to herself the words she had just spoken, "Oh, it's going to be glorious, oh, it's going to be glorious," over and over again out of sheer joy. For all her maturity of mind she was half child, and as she swung on with lithe step, the red feather in her straw hat nodding and dancing as she threw back her head, the joyous side was uppermost in her.

"What's that?" she said suddenly, stopping with a start a few minutes later. "I believe those wretched cows are coming toward me. And I'm just as afraid of them as I can be."

It was true that the group of cattle she had observed were moving in the direction of the path on which she had now reached a position

nearly opposite them. All at once a great fright took her and she stood still, trembling.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she cried. "And one of them I believe must be a bull!"

Behind her and in front the path stretched for a long distance in either direction, divided from the fields only by occasional clumps of bushes. She must go, nevertheless, one way or another along it, for its opposite side was bounded by a high fence over which there was no climbing. The cattle, attracted no doubt by the brilliant plume of her hat, began to move toward her, led by a gigantic, thick-chested creature who was indeed the king of the herd.

Frightened as Clare was, she did not wholly lose her self-control. She wanted to scream, but did not dare. She realized that her safety depended on herself alone. Making up her mind to retrace her steps, she began, walking backward and keeping her eye on her pursuers, to cover as rapidly as she could under the circumstances the long stretch back to the road.

The bull, who dragged a nose chain which

apparently he had succeeded somehow in detaching from its stake, seeing Clare retreating, came on with evident intention, followed hesitatingly at some distance by his herd. A snort, then the beginnings of a bellow came from him, and he began to paw up the loose earth as his eye caught again the scarlet of the feather on her hat. Still he did not charge as yet and so far had not much gained upon her. No doubt the steadiness of her retreat held him in check. Clare dared not think what would happen if the situation changed at all. If it would only last for the next three hundred yards! If it only would!

Walking rapidly backward is not wholly certain, however, particularly on an uneven path strewn with rocks. She had just thought of the possibility of safety when her foot caught and she fell. A sharp cry of terror broke from her, and she thought she caught the tramp of the bull's hooves as he charged toward her.

It was not, however, the animals that she heard approaching, but a man. Coming along the path in the same direction Clare Manton

had been going, he had just caught sight of her predicament, and now was running up rapidly behind her. A glance showed him the situation and at the same time suggested a means of saving her. The cattle had moved nearer and the bull, far in advance, was now pawing the earth violently and swinging his head viciously from side to side. If he was to succeed, there was no time to lose.

"Take off your hat and give it to me," he cried sharply, stooping over Clare. "Quick!"

She did not comprehend him at first, and when she did, her fingers trembled so that she could not find the pin. Not waiting for her, he reached down and with steady hand pulling out the pin, raised the hat on high.

"Get up," he said sharply again, in a low voice. "Go back along the path as quickly as you can. Don't lose a second. I will look after the cattle."

Without waiting to see whether she obeyed or not, he advanced toward the bull. The latter, catching sight of the scarlet feather coming toward him, at last lowered his head and with a rush and a roar charged toward its bearer.

His adversary, however, was prepared for him. With considerable agility, he leaped aside as the bull came on, and secured a new position farther from the path, whence again he began to provoke the animal. In this way in the course of a half dozen charges, he succeeded in leading the bull a hundred yards or so from the path, the rest of the herd meanwhile keeping their distance and staring with stupid admiration at the antics of their lord and master.

Clare Manton meanwhile had retreated along the path to a point where she saw herself within reachable distance of a pair of bars. Here she stopped. Her rescuer was apparently about to execute a final coup. Catching sight of her just at that moment standing there, he waved to her with his hand to retreat farther. But she paid no attention to the order, being tense now with fear for him. Her heart was all in what he was doing, in his quickness and cleverness—and danger. He had lured the bull near one of the small clumps or islands of trees already mentioned as dotting over the long stretch of field. As the animal came on now for his next rush, the man, instead of keep-

ing the irritating scarlet ensign in his hand, threw the hat, as he dodged, in front of the bull and into the underbrush of the trees. The creature for a moment hesitated, then with a mighty bellow rushed on to the bushes and began to rend the hat. The amateur bull-fighter meanwhile had dashed around the clump of trees and was half way across the open field toward Clare before the bull had thought to look for him.

"How silly to worry about him," the girl exclaimed to herself, pressing her lips together with a deep sigh of relief as she saw him coming back. "He's amply able to take care of himself. What sort of a welcome should I give to a young conquering hero, I wonder. He's rather charming, apparently."

Her heart beat excitedly as she watched him slow down his pace and draw up to her. He had dropped his own hat, too, before the bull, to delay the animal a minute, and she noticed his light brown hair, moist with his exercise and curling in the wind. He was young, tall, erect, with shoulders unconsciously thrown back, and his eyes, she could see, were blue and

open. The girl had never been quite so alive as she was at that moment, but her expression, strange to say, as she met his smile, was particularly cold.

"Thank you very much," she said slowly. "But could you not have brought back my hat?"

His eyes met hers with a laugh.

"Aren't you jolly ungrateful," said he.

Clare's heart felt a strange joyousness in it.

"I suppose," said she, "you think you're rather a hero?"

"It would be awfully nice if *you* did," he answered, laughing.

"I don't think you take things seriously. It was my best hat."

"It was *my only* one," he said, mocking her. "What are we going to do next? Aren't you going back to the road?"

They had come to a standstill near the pair of bars and their eyes met at his question. Clare, with the queer feminine faculty, was aware by this time of every detail of his feature and dress, and had even made some guesses as to his identity. But most of all, every

thought, every intuition, brought her a delight she had never experienced before.

"I wanted to get over to that orchard," she said, nodding with her head to the distant slope of the hill with its lighter green showing over the quarter of a mile.

"I wonder," said he, looking at the bunch of cattle, "if you would be afraid to come along the path now. I think it would be pretty safe."

Clare repressed a feminine shudder and looked across the field. The cattle had moved farther out away from the path and seemed to have forgotten their hostility.

"Shan't I be taking you out of your way?" she said, looking at him.

"I could help you over the fence if worse came to worst," he said, laughing. "Oh, no—I am going through the orchard too—I live at the house there at the top of the hill. I think it will be quite safe."

A slight contraction of the eyebrows, if her companion had noticed it, would have shown that Clare Manton was thinking hard. But she made no response to his declaration.

"All right," she answered. "I feel quite safe in your valorous company."

The cattle took little or no notice of them as they retraced their steps along the path.

"It was just here I came upon you," said the young man, as they reached the point where Clare had fallen. "Do you know, I don't think you've thanked me half enough."

He looked at her with a smile.

"Don't you think," she said, throwing back her head a trifle and laughing, "the opportunity to meet me, enough reward in itself?"

For the first time she let the electricity of her eyes play upon him and he felt a thrill of elation. But at the same time he discovered that he was decidedly provoked. It was exciting and fun, to be sure, to play toreador with Mortimer Dane's prize bull, but there had been, nevertheless, a decided amount of risk about it, of which he was becoming more conscious now than he had been at the moment. Besides, he had sacrificed his straw hat, which he could ill afford to lose. It had been all very well to be a bit flirtatious just to let things down easily

and to prevent any scene, but surely the occasion demanded some serious recognition. Not that a man wants thanks, of course, but—well, he nevertheless was irritated and cross.

Still, he had not the power, under the spell of her eyes, to show it.

"I think," he said, "you must be a bit of a flirt."

"I am glad you are thinking at least a little about me, instead of about yourself and the bull," she answered nonchalantly.

He looked at her out of the corner of his eye a second, and then smiled to himself. If she wanted that sort of thing, he would give it to her.

"It's inexcusable his getting loose—simply criminal. I shall speak to Cutter about it. It might have been pretty serious."

"I think you must be rather fond of serious things of every sort," said she.

He smiled again to himself. He did not quite understand her, but still, there was a certain fun in thwarting her wishes.

"It's rather a pleasant day, isn't it?" he said, laughing carelessly.

"Is that the bridge?" she asked in the same spirit, but looking straight ahead.

"Yes, my lady,—and then we shall be perfectly safe."

Clare turned when they reached the rustic bridge, and putting one hand on the rail, looked up at him. All the laughter had gone out of her eyes, and he noticed for the first time that her face was white.

"Did you think I was really ungrateful for what you did?" she said.

Suddenly, he saw her eyelids close.

"I fear I am going to faint," she said in a low voice.

One hand stretched out toward him. He seized it and supported her with his other arm. For a moment she leaned there, with closed eyes, in his arms. Then slowly she opened them, shook herself, and smiled.

"I won't be guilty of any such feminine weakness. Isn't there a seat around here?"

He helped her to a big rock at the end of the bridge.

"Get me some water," she said.

When he had brought it in his hands from

the brook, she made him put it on her face.

"You see I am quite unadorned by art," she said in a low voice, seeming to recover herself. "You mustn't apply such remedies to any other girl, unless she gives you express permission. There, just a minute and I shall be all right."

He stood anxiously before her, waiting, with his face averted a little. She took the opportunity to throw one more quick look of scrutiny at him. Then she made a slight movement and he turned.

"I know you didn't think I was really going to thank you," she said, looking up to him with sobered eyes as she brushed back her hair. "It was all a little too much for me, and when you said that word 'safe,' I nearly tumbled over."

Then the smile appeared in her eyes.

"Besides," she added, "don't you think it is well for heroes to be taken down a little?"

Their eyes met again and the same electric current passed from one to the other.

"I believe I know who you are," she said.

"And I surely know who you are," he answered. "I've been studying over it. You're Clare Manton."

She had put out her hand in recognition of her thanks, he had taken it and was bending down over her—their faces brought very near to each other by force of circumstances. Her eyes met his again at that moment, and a boldness he had not at all anticipated came over him.

"You owe me something, too, don't you?" he said.

Her face suddenly went pale, and his perhaps a trifle redder, but his eyes did not waver. In another instant, his second hand had joined with hers, he had bent forward and their lips had met.

A soft laugh broke from Clare's lips and she leaped to her feet.

"Shocking!" she cried. "What a little fool I was to let you do that."

"Do you think so?" he said, laughing. "I don't."

"You ought to. Put it down to the time and

the place and my guessing of who you are. If you will drop my hands, we can perhaps be properly introduced, Cousin Alfred."

The young man stood a second in front of Clare in silence, searching her face with his eyes, their hands still clasped. Then after a moment, he let hers drop.

"So you thought I was your cousin?" he said slowly.

Clare started at his look.

"You're Alfred Dane, aren't you?" she said sharply, alarmed by something in his way of speaking.

He shook his head.

"No," he said decisively, "I'm not."

"But—"

"I'm Roger Calthrop, Mr. Dane's secretary," he said.

Clare Manton stood surveying Calthrop a moment, her eyes seeming to read him through and through to his soul. Then a hard look crept over her eyes.

"Oh, you are, are you?" she said.

"Exactly," he echoed in the same tone. "Miss Dane sent me down to the station to

meet you, but we evidently missed each other, so I let the bus go home, did some errands in the village and was just getting back."

There was something in her tone that cut him badly when she spoke again.

"So you are my Uncle Morty's secretary, Mr. Calthrop?"

"At your service, Miss Manton," he said, bowing coldly.

They were both somewhat constrained by this time.

"Let us go up to the house, if you will," said Clare. "I came by the stopping train, and was told that it was a pleasant walk to Mr. Dane's, so I started out to take it."

"Very well," said he, following her as she started off toward the orchard.

CHAPTER IV

MOONLIGHT

THE hour that Alfred Dane spent on the Fearings' piazza left the world like a beautiful dream to him. Not that he was not very much alive as Fred Fearing drove him back to Downham—not that there was anything unsubstantial about his beating pulses, his active brain, the new sense of power, the new desire for accomplishment that were at work in him. The world was more intense and real to him than it had ever been before. Life at the moment had for him the charm which exists for us usually only in dreams and at certain rare moments of waking happiness.

"The latch-string's always out, you know," remarked Fearing, when his car had climbed up the hill to Downham Hundreds, and he had deposited Alfred Dane at his door. "Now you've found the way, you must come over often. And soon, I hope."

"Thank you very much," said Alfred, reaching up and shaking hands with the man in the car. "I shall surely hope to do so."

That was his formal way of speaking. His brain at the same moment was tumultuously estimating how many hours must go by before he could decently appear at the other's house.

"You will come over and see me too, will you not, Fearing?" he added, looking up at his friend in the car.

Fred Fearing's heart in its turn leaped with delight. He had been waiting for some such thing to be said and for a while had been afraid that it was not going to come.

"Most assuredly, my dear fellow, I will, if you will allow me," he answered, nodding to Alfred with what seemed to be cordiality. "It was awfully jolly, our running across each other to-day, eh? So long and see you soon again."

He started his machine, and nodding once more to Dane, drove down the avenue, taking frequent occasion, however, to look round about him at such signs of Dane grandeur as his eyes could meet. It was all intensely interesting to

him, for he had wondered many a time how things would seem if he were where he was at that moment.

He had earned his reward, in a way. When he had first come back from putting up his car after leaving Dane and his sister, he had thought that they both were a trifle shy. He had put it down on Dane's part, however, to the awkwardness that was very evident in many ways in him, and had exerted himself to make matters go right. Had he known it, the two would have got along better without him, but if eventually they were to find themselves in the company of a third person, they could not have met a more useful one than was he.

His part had been to keep the conversation in channels that gave Alfred Dane a chance to feel at his ease. A compliment about the latter's Commencement part had gone so well as to assure him that the serious was the play he wanted, and once he had put things in motion, he had been content to sit back and let his sister do the talking. She was a steady reader, he knew, and able to hold her own, and it was evident to his keen eye that she and Dane were

at least somewhat interested in each other. He had taken occasion to leave them alone just enough, and he read Dane's preoccupation on the drive to Downham accurately and with pleasure to himself. Fred Fearing, too, as he drove back to his dinner, began to estimate how long it would be before they should see Alfred Dane at Bromesgrove again.

Had he remained at home the next morning instead of going to his office in town, and had he been on the lookout toward the highroad running by the house, he would have had his question very soon answered. Four times, driving one of the Downham Hundreds automobiles, Alfred contrived, by making circuits of the roads about Bromesgrove, to pass by the house.

The sense aroused in him by his experience with Phyllis Fearing was one of mixed delight and restlessness. When he awoke on that next morning he found himself not only unbelievably happy, but also more or less uneasy. Love makes the world over for us, both by its beauty and its challenge.

He felt that he must be doing something.

Only by some lucky chance, of course, could he hope that day to see again his lovely girl with the brown eyes and the soft voice, but it would be an intense delight to him to flutter round her nearer presence. Accordingly he made an early start away with the car.

He did not see any sign of Miss Fearing as he passed by her house. Probably if he had, his shyness would have prevented his calling again so soon. He was not unhappy, however, at his failure. The day passed by, full of half-rapturous thoughts, and he arrived home in the afternoon, full of the same excited sense of life that had been holding him all the time.

It had so chanced that the evening before he had not met Clare Manton. Clare, after her little episode with Roger Calthrop, had felt the need of thinking it all over by herself, and accordingly, under the excuse of being tired, had succeeded in having her dinner in her room. It was a first taste of luxury also, that she was well prepared to enjoy.

In the morning she had breakfasted in the same way. Then, standing in the window to inspect what to her was a new landscape, she

had chanced to catch sight of Alfred starting off in his machine down the avenue.

"Cousin Alfie, I'll wager," she murmured, staring lazily after the car. "I wonder, I wonder—"

She did not put into words her speculation, but her expression showed that mingling of feelings and hardness that was characteristic of her. She could not get more than an imperfect glimpse of her cousin, but after all that did not matter very much to her. It was not of him that she was dreaming—or only incidentally.

However, as the day went by and he did not appear, she became almost interested in him. Her own inner mood made her—as Alfred's was making him—restless and excited, and she began almost to wish her cousin would get home, and let her look him over.

She had seen him go away in his car, so she thought she would put herself in his way when he did return. Something to do would at least kill time. Accordingly, when Alfred drove up the avenue about four, he saw a girl in a white frock, sitting in one of the chairs that were put

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out every fine afternoon on the lawn underneath the twin oaks.

The drive curved somewhere near the trees which rose about a hundred yards from the house. It was Miss Sarah Dane's idea that underneath was an effective place to have tea —in which she was right—for you could get from it a magnificent view, reaching eight or ten miles westward to the Middleton and North Andover hills.

The girl held a red parasol over her and seemed lazily to be surveying the landscape. In reality she had her eye almost curiously on the approaching car, and she was humming to herself a bit of jeering song.

As the automobile came toward her, Clare rose and stepped forward a bit so that the driver could hardly get by without stopping.

"Aren't you my cousin, Alfred Dane?" she said to him, as he pulled up his car.

No one had more feminine magnetism than Clare, and Alfred felt it at once. Also, she was a pretty sight as she stood there, her eyes taking him all in. He was to think of the picture she made for many a year after.

"Yes," he said, leaping down from the car; "and you're Clare Manton, aren't you? I'm very glad to see you."

He reached out his hand to hers and held it pleasantly in his own. Although he would not have known what such a thing meant, he was in love with girls just then, and for a moment he had a little dominance and gallantry about his bearing that made him seem more mature than he usually would have appeared.

Clare's eyes sparkled and a slight feeling of interest came over her. Preoccupied as she was by a day spent in reflections by no means favorable to Alfred Dane, she would not have been even then above a certain satisfaction at finding him flirtable.

"I'll tell you what you must do, Cousin," she said, letting her eyes play on his; "leave your car and come over here and talk with me before the others come out."

"All right," said Alfred, stepping back and stopping the engine. "It's a great pleasure to me you have come."

"Thanks," said Clare, laughing. "I hope you may find it so."

She added quickly and rather meaningly: "Why haven't you been here before to welcome me?"

They had been walking side by side, but now having come under the shade of the trees, she turned and faced him, her fingers twirling her parasol so that it sent the light flashing against the dark gloss of her hair.

Alfred's mood of self-confidence just then had somewhat passed, and suddenly he felt himself nervous in her presence.

"I hope you will pardon me my neglect," he said. "I had—well—I—"

He halted and Clare threw a little inquiring look at him.

"Ah, I see," she said, laughing merrily. "A secret—probably some lady. Perhaps some day you will let me into it. However, it doesn't really matter. I am not a bit inquisitive."

A slight blush had reddened Dane's cheek. In the embarrassment that held him, he felt what was really needless—that he ought to say something.

"Oh, no—" he began hurriedly.

"Don't fib," said Clare calmly, shaking a

finger at him. "It isn't worth it just now. The real question is, of course, now that you've got a new cousin, how do you like her?"

The question, accompanied by the little mockery in her manner, was not one to put him at his ease. He managed to pull himself together, however, as he answered.

"Why, very much, I am sure."

Nevertheless, it came over him as he looked in her face again that she was somehow laughing at him, and the embarrassment already started in him grew. There was apt to be about Clare, when she was with those who were not wholly to her liking, a suggestion of superiority, and very likely her cousin caught it, just then. For at that moment she discovered something that seemed to remove her leagues from Alfred Dane.

Over the lawn from the house door she saw Roger Calthrop coming.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Alfred, turning and making the same discovery the second after. "Here comes Roger. I think I'll run along and change before tea, if you'll excuse me."

He was glad, he found, to have the oppor-

tunity presented to him to leave his cousin thus abruptly. Their first meeting had already made him interested in her, but also ill at ease, and he felt a sense of comfortableness now at the thought that he could run away.

Yet also he felt it would not be quite right to leave without saying another word of welcome.

"I'm so glad you're here, Clare," he said, holding out his hand and looking with a sort of graciousness that was the property of the Danes at her. "We shall have some good times together, I know. I'll be out with the rest at tea, and there'll be lots of things to talk about. You know Roger, of course."

He had left her the next moment—and again with an impression almost favorable. The touch of dignity mingled with kindliness about his manner had made her half like him. Yet the next minute she had changed completely.

"Piffle!" she thought, with a laugh, giving her appraisal of him in the word, as she threw one glance at Alfred's retreating back, and then quite dismissed him from her mind.

An intense excitement had taken possession

of her—tremulous, joyous, irresistible—at the approach of Roger Calthrop. He had in his hand a chair, evidently to add to the number under the oaks, and he walked across the grass, she observed, carrying it, as he did most things, with a certain grace.

"How d'ye do?" he said, bowing to Clare. "Miss Dane sent me out with reënforcements to the seating capacity. We're all coming out pretty soon, I fancy."

It was the first time that fate had left them alone together that day. Before people, it had been easy enough for two such clever people as Clare and Calthrop to establish a *modus vivendi,* and probably no other soul had the slightest idea that the meeting of the two had seen any unusual features. As if by common consent, even the incident of the cattle had not been mentioned. And yet, on the other hand, neither of the two had done much during the last twenty-four hours but think of the other.

"I'm full of admiration for Aunt Sarah's precision," said Clare coolly, well aware that her heart was beating more rapidly than according to her proposed scheme of life any well-

regulated heart had a right to beat, and yet, on the other hand, never having felt more alive in her life than just then.

"She has a genius for doing us all well," said Calthrop, with equal coolness. "A fine view, is it not?"

Clare looked at him and laughed.

"Have you been thinking of me to-day, Mr. Calthrop?" she said, boldly turning her eyes toward his.

Calthrop turned away and stood a second before answering, looking off quite without sign of feeling over the long sweep of hill and valley, as if admiring its beauty. He felt he knew now pretty well the sort of girl he had to deal with. Finally he turned in a leisurely fashion back toward her.

"Thinking of you?" he asked interrogatively.

Clare laughed and nodded approvingly, but again mockingly.

"I could see I hurt you, you know, pretty badly by what I said when I found out who you were yesterday. You needn't deny it," she said.

For a moment Calthrop was silent.

"The little devil!" he thought to himself. "She's an artist in men's feelings, like all women, and infernally clever at it, too. That's the trouble with me, too—she's hit the mark."

"Apparently it would be useless to do so to a person as sharp-sighted as you are, Miss Manton," he said aloud drily.

Then Clare bent forward her head just a wee bit toward him, her eyes sparkling half with triumph, half with some other feeling.

"I so wanted to see what you'd look like when you were angry," she said softly and slowly. "I rather like you in it, do you know?"

Something in her tone made him turn his eyes toward her, and suddenly an emotion, utterly the reverse of his anger, flashed over him. His lips softened, his eyes relaxed their frown, and his face grew a little pale. His eyes looked into hers just a second, keenly, and, for Roger Calthrop, shyly and eagerly. He was about to open his lips, though what he would have said under the combined influence of his

varying emotions, is uncertain, when the sound of voices at a distance, made them both look round.

Miss Dane and a party of visitors were coming out of the house door and beginning to cross the lawn.

Calthrop had been thinking of Clare Manton constantly since the preceding afternoon. For one thing something in her mode of speech after the kiss had wounded him, as she had guessed; and not ever having been wounded before, he had counted on a chance for revenge. Underneath, besides, he found himself attracted by her; and altogether he had been looking forward to just such an opportunity of seeing her again as was now being broken into.

"Here come our dear friends now," remarked Clare, at the sight of the approaching party.

Perhaps a note of disappointment was audible in the way she said it. Or perhaps it was by a glance at her eyes that Roger saw that her feelings were in a way like his own. She had enjoyed the two minutes since they had stood there more than any in her life, and she, too,

was loath to let them go. If she had taken a moment's thought, possibly she would not have spoken with such a tone, or let her feeling be evident in any way. Or perhaps she would. As Clare had told her mother—she had her dreams also! At any rate, at the dictation of the strange, overpowering currents of life, her eyes did just for a second meet his then. They had known long enough beforehand that they were going to, to try to check them. But at that moment she could not fight against a certain fatefulness in the air, and with the look a spark seemed to pass from one to the other.

They had both turned back from glancing at the approaching party, and were looking down at the formal garden stretching away at their right at one side of the house.

"It's a good place to smoke a cigarette after dinner," said Calthrop, coolly, in a low voice, nodding toward it. "I always do so for a half hour or so."

Afterwards he could not have told whether he meant anything or not by his words. Perhaps he had been fairly innocent and his desires had taken shape without his being wholly

conscious of their having done so, though Roger Calthrop's was a well-knit, clever personality that did not often do or say what was not intended by its owner. At any rate, destiny made him say them—and Clare understood what he meant.

She said nothing. But her lips pressed together firmly for a moment, and she whirled her sunshade on her shoulder almost viciously.

There had been something about Roger Calthrop that, from the first moment she had caught sight of his face bending over hers, had attracted her. Whether it was his pleasant open face, and his good looks, or whether it was a charming, clever, understanding way he had of meeting people, or whether it was just the moment and the circumstances where she had met him, she did not know. Clare had found herself at any rate all that day temperamentally and joyously fascinated by his image—all the more probably because she knew very well that her greeting of him when she discovered who he was was insolent and calculated to sting. And at his words now she

knew that she was going to do what they suggested.

After dinner that evening, she watched her chance. She knew that she could not carry out her mad desire to talk with him again without a certain amount of internal warfare, but as the band is ordered to play on the battlefield where the fight is going to be hardest, so she concealed her disturbance of mind from others, and tried to drown it in herself by the jingle of her conversation. She knew all the time, however, that she was going to slip away at last to the terrace, and join him.

She and her mother—the only person in the room capable of vying with her in vivacity—had learned to work together in harmony, and Clare found herself with the coffee accelerating the pace of the conversation rather wildly. She talked fast and recklessly and more than once caught a look on her mother's face that she was accustomed to read as "Go slow." But she only laughed and sparkled the more audaciously.

"They like it," she said to herself, shrug-

ging her spiritual shoulders, as she looked about at the table-full. "I am unusually bounding to-night, and can venture."

At last she found her opportunity, however. Quietly and unobserved, she managed to slip out of the drawing-room and onto the terrace, overlooking the garden, where she could see Calthrop's bulk as he paced up and down a path some thirty yards away. The night was fragrant with roses, the box and all the smells of early summer, and Clare drew in the mingled odors to the delight of all her sensuous soul.

"I know I oughtn't to do it," she thought, with a laugh. "Only to-night's too beautiful for anything to be wrong."

She stood on the steps a moment with her frock gathered about her, and Roger Calthrop, seeing the white form against the house, had no doubt it was she. Then she tripped down the steps and came toward him.

"Divine, isn't it?" she said in her clear voice that had more ring than sweetness in it. "Do you mind if I walk with you?"

"Not tremendously," he said, with the irony that is delight. "Shall I throw this away?"

"Please don't. If it weren't that mother and I agreed not to know the meaning of a cigarette while we're here, I should ask you for one."

"Miss Dane would set her face against it if not her soul. But I'm flattered to be your confessor."

He knew that they would reach something more serious before long and so did she. And yet both found a strong titillation of mind in lingering in small talk.

"You haven't asked my pardon for yesterday," she said at last, after they had been silent for a minute.

They had stopped walking and he stood facing her. Her tone puzzled him, it was so indefinite. His own heart was throbbing with a hundred hopes and fears.

"Do you want me to?" he said lightly.

She could just see his face and tried with a swift glance to read its expression.

"I suppose that Mamie or Sissie would ask

you if you thought you had been a gentleman," she said. "However, it isn't that I mind your kissing me."

He knew that her words just then were not meant to be suggestive, but, nevertheless, he put his hands behind him to have them out of temptation. The thick, bushy borders of the path threw the two pretty closely together.

"Is that permissive?" he said, with an uneasy laugh.

"I believe you're a little in love with me," she said in a low voice.

He grew pale and was hardly conscious of her face peering through the darkness at him. It was strange the effect she had on him. Usually he would have known perfectly how to handle such a thing. Even now he managed to recover himself and speak lightly.

"And if I were?"

She had tried him and read him to her satisfaction.

"Wouldn't that be jolly?" she said carelessly.

Apparently she had simply been playing with him. His heart sank, but he pulled himself together to try to cover up the feeling.

"I may experiment some time," he said coldly.

She was disappointed that he was so calm.

"You're horrid," said she, bending toward him.

The directness of her words bore him off his feet. He caught her red lips there before him in the darkness and her pale face and languid eyes, and remembered only that he had been nearer them on the yesterday and that she had brought back the remembrance herself of it. Suddenly, he seized her, drew her toward him and covered her lips with kisses.

Clare herself, after the first second, was frightened by his impetuosity and broke away from him.

"You must never do that again," she said, her eyes flashing.

He stood there stunned for a minute.

"Let us go in," he said at last.

"Wait," she said sharply, alarmed at the whole business, including her own part in it, and rushing to the one thing she could think of, to make things safe for the future.

"Wait, Mr. Calthrop; do you know why I am down here?"

If she could have seen it, Roger's face had grown red now, but he gave no answer.

"You spoke of being my confessor," she hurried on. "I'll make you it. I'm down here to marry my cousin, Alfred Dane. Don't tell him, but I'm going to. Perhaps you can guess why. He's a pill, but I want his millions."

He seemed to have known it all before, though the words slapped him in the face. That served to bring him back to himself, however, and call all his faculties into play.

"Let's put it down to the roses and the moonlight," he said lightly. "You know you were a bit provoking. But I beg your pardon very deeply. Will you forgive me?"

They had begun to walk toward the house. For some reason she was irritated with his tone and did not answer.

"I understand, of course, why you spoke as you did," he said more soberly, "and I shall of course hold it in the strictest confidence. I feel very badly about it all, indeed."

She did not answer. At that moment, Lou

Manton came out on the terrace before them. Clare laughed rather cynically.

"Mr. Calthrop has been showing me the garden, Mother," she called. "I don't believe you realize how charming it is."

Mrs. Manton tried hard to keep her annoyance from showing in her voice.

"You know you have a very light frock on, Clare," she said guardedly, "you had better come in."

"Directly, Mother," Clare answered.

"You are quite forbidden fruit, you see," she said in a whisper to Roger, with a low, mocking laugh. "Only when she's alarmed does Mother speak primly."

CHAPTER V

CLARE MANTON DOES NOT GO TO CHURCH

CLARE, as has been said, was what is widely known as temperamental—which means that she had the habit of living on high spirits and intense emotions. Her reflections that night were full of excited feeling, and she did not sleep quite the sleep of the just and peaceful. The consequence was that the next morning—which was Sunday—when she arrived at the breakfast-table, she was in a mood to take it out of somebody.

Her mother had duly warned her beforehand that church was a particularly holy institution with the Danes, and Clare had scented a pleasant opportunity for wickedness even at the announcement. It was Morty Dane's custom to find out at breakfast how his family and guests proposed to get to service, so that he might make up his carriage list; and at last he got to her.

"Will you walk, Clare?" he asked.

"Thanks, Uncle Morty," she said, with the appearance of perfectly calm innocence. "I won't go to-day."

"Oh, we always go here," said Morty, as if that settled the matter. "Shall I say—"

"That's very commendable of you all, I'm sure," said Clare, seeing that she had now the center of the stage, and that things were going to be enjoyable. "I shall hope to join you occasionally. I don't care much for regular church."

Mortimer Dane looked up as if some missile had struck him sharply in the face. It was the first time any such thing had ever been said in his house.

"But as my guest—" he began soberly, with the look on his face of a person who has been deeply wounded, but is trying to restrain his grief.

"Dear Uncle Morty," she said, smiling at him, "you won't think me awfully uncivil, will you, if I don't?"

"It's rather too bad to have to be naughty," she thought to herself. "But he must be civilized, and after all, it isn't bad fun."

Morty Dane had already in the last thirty-six hours discovered that, in spite of Lou Manton's assurance to him, things in his household did not go just as they had before. Up to this time, however, he had rather enjoyed the difference—though perhaps he would not have confessed as much. Now, however, he felt that it was time to assert himself.

"I consider, Clare," he said, in a deeper tone, his mouth assuming a stubborn expression, "that every woman, at any rate, should go to church. To say the least, it looks well."

A ripple of laughter came to Clare's lips. The Lord had delivered the situation into her hands!

"Look at me," she said, jumping up from her chair, pushing it back, and standing out before them all. "Look at me, Uncle Morty. Can you imagine me as doing anything that didn't look well?"

She knew that the eyes, not only of Morty Dane, but also of every one else at the table, including the two young men, were on her, and so she stood there just a second or so, before them all. A pretty picture she was, too, in

her light ecru frock, with its low neck, and its sleeves leaving the lower arms bare. Both Lou and Clare were very sure in matters of dress, and Clare, in particular, in her schooling abroad, had seen enough of the morning slipshodness of French life, to realize the value of absolute care in all details at breakfast. So very cool and perfect and alluring she looked as she stood there, a smile of mingled power and haughtiness in her eyes. Finally, she tossed her head with a laugh and relapsed into her chair again.

"You couldn't, could you?" she said, nodding over to Morty, with a confidential smile, as if now surely he would be happy to acknowledge his mistake.

Morty Dane did not know quite what to make of things. He felt vexed, and yet not somehow as much as he would have expected.

"I'm sure I don't know much about girls," he mumbled in a low tone, hating to acknowledge audibly that he was defeated.

"Only that an attractive one can do no wrong, Uncle Morty? Cool of me, isn't it? being so complimentary to myself, but as no

one else will, I must. I wonder who I want to stay at home with me."

Clare, flushed with triumph, had decided that she must have a bigger victory yet. She passed her eyes rapidly up and down the company, skipping by Roger Calthrop with an imperceptible shudder, and letting them rest at last on Alfred Dane.

Alfred, who had a premonition of what was coming, felt disturbed by the prospect.

"It's several months since I've been to church at home," he hastened to remark uneasily. "I think I like Uncle Dick's sermons as well as any preacher's I have heard."

"Shall you mind missing the service this morning?" said Clare, turning the full innocence of her eyes on him.

"Alfred always goes to church," said Morty Dane sharply.

"Just the person, then, to stay at home and play with me. You must be in prime spiritual condition, Cousin. I'm so glad, because I want you specially."

Really, thought Lou Manton, the daring of her offspring was going a little too far. She

could see the shocked expression on her cousin Morty's face, and Miss Sarah Dane's keen eyes turned on Clare with a certain questioning, mixed with amusement. She hastened to take a hand in the conversation.

"Do you still have noon dinner at the parsonage on Sundays, Morty?" she asked quietly.

Somehow Morty could not be as angry as he wanted to be at the overturning to his ideas of Sunday accomplished by the demure-appearing young lady at his left hand, who now reached over and patted his hand as it lay on the table, as if to atone for her rebellion. Still, he was not going to acknowledge as much.

"Yes, Lou," he said, drawing away his hand, and frowning as if he were angry; though in reality, his old, self-centered heart could not help being pleased by all these pretty faces and merry voices and unexpected little ways about him. "At a quarter past one, precisely. Dick is very particular about the hour—in which he is quite right. On Sunday, at least, things should be regular."

There was a touch of vindictiveness in his

last words. Nevertheless he was beaten, and knew it, and somehow endured it. He did not even put any more obstacles in the way of Clare's keeping Alfred at home with her if she chose.

She was almost sorry that she had undertaken the last move, for her heart was very much with the party that were going to church, and an hour or two with her cousin seemed to her the height of boredom. Still, for the sake of discipline, she considered that having made the play, it was necessary to go through with it. Accordingly, at the end of church time, she carried Alfred, who had spent the preceding hour reading, without any great satisfaction, off for a walk, to the end at the parsonage, nearer the village.

"How do you like Roger?" asked Alfred, after they had fairly got started on the road.

Clare's mind, which had previously been wandering, came to attention.

"He's a friend of yours, isn't he?" she replied slowly.

"Of several years' standing," said Alfred. "We fell in with each other when he was a

sophomore and I was a freshman, and found our tastes more or less congenial. Roger's a bully boy."

The last was not a phrase original with Alfred Dane, but having heard it somewhere, he used it to express his feeling for his friend. There was something in Roger Calthrop, quite different from any of his own qualities, which Alfred could see and admire; and with the introduction of his friend's name, his tone became more certain and he himself more alive.

Clare's heart, too, came back into the conversation, and it occurred to her that the walk after all might not be wholly lost.

"Tell me about him," she said, smiling at her cousin, and speaking with an almost imperceptibly softer tone in her voice. "He seems rather interesting."

Alfred at once launched out on his friend's merits—his popularity at college, his prowess at athletics, how he had played end two years at football, and made his H, too, in the hurdles, and lastly, how, in spite of such things, which usually take fellows away from studies, Roger had been one of the best classical men

of his time at Cambridge, and had actually gone in and got Final Honors in the same, the year before—just as he, Alfred Dane, he took pains to let transpire, a little proudly, had done this year. All of which details, although she did not understand some of them, particularly the last ones, made Clare's heart beat a little faster, and her eyes, too, shine, as she deftly led her cousin on to chatter of more and more of the gossip of the university, which up to this time, had been his life. And Alfred, in his turn, could not help thinking how pretty she looked, and that she seemed to enjoy his talk, and that really he was not so uneasy in her presence as he had been the day before, but that she seemed very kind to him and likable. And so they both, after all, enjoyed their Sunday devotions, and Clare arrived at the parsonage about one o'clock, very cool outwardly, but within, in a very pretty excitement that she was to see again this charming fellow that her cousin had made out such a paragon of all manly excellencies.

Dicky Dane's house was altogether too large for a decent parsonage, but was entitled to that

name, not only because a parson lived there, but also because it was an enlargement of Morty and Dick's great-grandfather's house—the old gentleman over a century before had had the parish.

The size of his home made people only the more say that it was a pity Dick was a bachelor. He managed to find plenty of use, nevertheless, for all its twenty-five bedrooms—if for nothing else that his clerical friends were always ready to come and stay with him—and it was a great place for gatherings of the brahmins at times of associations and institutes. Its grounds were nearly the most beautiful in New England, and the colonial house among the beeches and elms was correspondingly stately.

All the family, at least, knew why Dick had gone into the church—at any rate, they all had the feeling that if he had not, some one else of their number would have been drafted. The Danes were a great conservative family, and almost every generation since the first great Mortimer, some one of them had been a clergyman. One or two Episcopalian, but the

greater number Unitarian, as was the parish which their ancestors had really made to their liking and where the family itself had chosen the spot to strike its roots into the ground. No one went in for the church now, of course—at least, very few of their set did—but that was all the more reason why the Danes should throw themselves into the breach. The church was a grand old conservative institution—one of the few remaining in a democratic country—and it was most fitting that one of their number, they felt, should have part in it.

In fact, the family rather prided themselves on the disposition of their forces in the present generation. Bill was the greatest banker in Boston, and had increased the family fortune from twelve to thirty millions; Isabelle, Mrs. Epsom, was to be seen in the final niche when the curtains drew back and discovered the smart folk of New England, and Dick was in the church. Morty, who nominally was head of the family, was not so striking. He had thought when a young man of going into politics, but had not had the make-up for it. But at any rate, he was somewhat withdrawn

from the mob, at least, and its compromises and Philistinism.

Bill was the cleverest of the family, but Dick was not far behind. All the Danes, as has been said, were earnest, but these two seldom let their earnestness be seen. He did a good, quiet piece of work in his parish, and an influential one outside—always on the side, of course, of that Unitarianism which he considered had in the old time been Church, and the dominant power of New England, and which he was bound should remain such now—and always bitterly in opposition to anything looking like dissent, which he feared and hated, with all his strong Tory heart. Personally, he was a man just under fifty; a trifle bald, face not unkindly, but always now with a touch of mockery about it, head set well and solidly down on his shoulders and a neck to convince the observer that no man could be a success in life who wore a collar under size fifteen.

"Hullo," he said to Clare, as she came in. "So here's the last of my cousins, eh? Not at church, too, this morning. But you're a very pretty pagan, nevertheless, Clare, I see."

He held her hand and looked down on her for a minute, searching her face curiously, if with friendliness. She noticed he had the sort of mouth that is supposed to belong to a bishop, and wondered how firm he could be. It was a favorite speculation of hers about people who impressed her. Nevertheless she liked him.

"You look a deal like your mother when she was your age," he said, as he pressed her hand and let it drop. "Eh, Lou?"

Mrs. Manton shrugged her shoulders.

"Think so, Dicky?" she said casually.

"You'll be a lot of good recruits for my shops and sales," he said. "I always take toll of the Philistine all I can in the summer. My Girls' Club comes this month, and the parish fair in September."

"Delighted, I'm sure," answered Lou, wondering if things would not stand a little better in September.

Clare, at the breakfast table, when making her selection for a companion in delinquence from church, had shuddered at the thought of the possibility of Roger Calthrop. The episode of the evening before had put her fully

on her guard as to her danger, and she had said to herself that she must then and there get herself out of the power of the charm which this man seemed to have for her. She had warned him in so many words of the necessity, and now on her side she said to herself that she would proceed, not only to treat him, but also to look upon him, as a mere acquaintance.

But such things, as we all know, are more easily resolved than done. She was clear-eyed, no less about herself than about others, and she had very plainly seen the danger she was running to all her keenly-held ambitions—which was one thing on her side. But on the other, poor girl; she had, oh, such an eager, passionate, grasping heart, and when her cousin told her that Roger Calthrop was one who had all things admirable about him—as with her own perceptions, she already knew that he had—she felt that organ beating very excitedly, and certain memories of the last two days seemed to shoot through it, and give it a very blinding, and sweet, and overwhelmingly energetic pain.

She took it for granted that the opportuni-

ties of the day would afford her some further tête-à-tête with Roger Calthrop. That was to be expected, she said soothingly to herself, and would do no harm to any one. She would be very cool and impersonal to him—would convey the impression on her part that she was quite indifferent; perhaps—the desires of a certain wounded pride in her suggested—leading him on his side to admire and be attracted all the more.

But it so happened that on that day no opportunity threw Clare and Roger together. At the parsonage, all the company kept in a group, and on the walk back to Morty Dane's, where Clare had fancied that perhaps he might stroll along beside her, she was left to follow on with the women-folk, while Roger and Alfred walked on over the fields, apparently quite forgetful of her existence.

Now Clare's emotions were of just that character that needed some thwarting to make them grow. If she could have seen Roger Calthrop easily, and made friends with him openly, her heart would not have dwelt so much on his attractiveness. But as it was, all her thoughts

were drawn to him as to an alluring and forbidden subject.

One matter was mentioned at the parsonage dinner table that must be alluded to here.

"Who were the people on the opposite side of the aisle, Richard?" said Sarah Dane. "Two or three pews back from ours, I mean. The woman had on an outrageous hat, in my opinion! Nevertheless, I dare say it came from Paris—it was smart enough, surely."

"I am more inclined to think, only from New York, Aunt Sarah," replied Dick, smiling. "They are new parishioners, it seems—live over at Bromesgrove. Ever heard of the Fearings?"

"William was speaking of somebody of that name last Sunday?"

"Yes, the same. The Mumble-the-Peg people, you know. That was Fearing himself. I spoke with his wife after service and it seems they're coming to church here—at least they talked of taking a pew. Really, in spite of Bill's anathemas, there must be some good in them if they take all that trouble to drive over here often to attend their own church."

"I've always thought that that was the way parsons judged of things, Dick," said Lou Manton coolly, looking at her cousin.

"Almost as women do, isn't it?" replied Dick, with a certain grimness, returning the glance. "We both somehow approve of those that approve of us, eh?"

At the first mention of the name of Fearing, it may be imagined how Alfred Dane had pricked up his ears. A little lump suddenly had seemed to rise in his throat, and his face, if any one had been looking at him, would have been seen to grow pale, and then after a second to turn almost crimson. When all our life for two days has been dreams of a pretty face, it causes a decided thumping of the heart when somebody, almost out of a clear sky, comes pretty close to alluding to our dreams. No one, as it happened, was looking at him.

He swallowed the lump in his throat as best he could, and looked round the table. Apparently no one had noticed his confusion.

"Who are the 'Mumble-the-Peg' people, Uncle Dick?" he asked.

"Why, the people who've been bearing

Mumble-the-Peg—one of the copper mines, you know. They've driven down the price from thirty to under two, and Bill says it's a scoundrelly house. Really, since they've come to church, I'm not so sure of it—I've thought myself that Bill was over optimistic on the mine. The Fearings, at any rate, made a good impression on me. They had a remarkably pretty young daughter with them, by the way."

Alfred, when Clare had made him stay at home from church with her, had felt a premonition of misfortune, but had by no means suspected that thus he should miss seeing Phyllis Fearing. And now his uncle's announcement made him irritated, angry, and eager. Phyllis's brown eyes had been there—at his church—where he should,—where he so easily might, have been. He wondered if she had expected, if she had wanted to see him, and a dozen interesting and delightfully exciting questions passed through his brain. He made no more inquiries, however, and nothing more was said on the subject, but his dreams were all of a flutter from that time on, and when they all

got back to the Hundreds, he took a book, and went off by himself into the gardens, that undisturbed he might think over what was now a very thrilling romance to him; and then later in the day he got his car and made off in the direction of Bromesgrove.

Clare, too, was full of day-dreams. She thought that when they got back home, her eagerly-desired chance to impress Roger Calthrop with her coolness would come in the leisure of the late Sunday afternoon. But again she was disappointed. Calthrop closeted himself with his chief in his study, and Clare, thinking they were working, became cross and peevish to everybody.

In reality, Roger was not discussing the pagan poets with Morty Dane, but had himself asked Mr. Dane for an interview, to beg a favor. And Clare herself was at the bottom of the whole business.

When Roger Calthrop had come to Mortimer Dane's as secretary a year earlier, it had been understood on both sides that the place was to be for him but a stepping-stone. A college friend of Alfred's and brought by the lat-

ter to his father's notice, he had been well equipped to do the rather demanding work Mr. Dane wanted, and had made himself thoroughly useful to his employer. Still, he had had no thoughts of remaining very long in such a position, and Mr. Dane had in fact himself suggested that when the right time came, he was ready to find him a place in his brother's office in Boston that would have more promise in it. Circumstances remaining as they had been three days earlier, Roger, who enjoyed the life at Downham, and had every reason to enjoy it, since he was treated almost as a son of the house, would have let himself drift on there at least till fall. But his attitude had changed now, and he felt he could not too soon make the change.

"I hope I'm not disturbing you on Sunday, Mr. Dane," he began, as soon as they were seated, "but I wondered if by any chance there was a place vacant now in Mr. William Dane's office."

"Pooh, Roger," said Morty Dane, offering a cigar to Roger, "I hoped you'd forgotten that."

"You've been very kind to me, indeed, sir," said Calthrop, rather disturbed at the memory of the turbulent thoughts that had been surging up in him for the last twenty-four hours. "I appreciate that deeply."

"I was thinking of the 'Parnassus,'" said the older man, with a sort of tenderness in his voice. "We are getting to such an interesting stretch now. You told me that you were fond of Juvenal, and I was counting on you there."

"Yes, and I am very sorry," answered Roger, who though he had a touch of the scholar, could yet smile at the irony of things just then. "But still, you know—"

He halted, not seeing just how to put it.

"I know," said Morty. "Young men have their way to make, I realize. Couldn't you stay with me, Roger, though, till fall?"

"I should like to so much," the young man returned, and then again he began with a "but." He was finding it easier than he had expected, but still he wanted to put the thing just right.

"I am anxious to begin, and then Alfred is home now. It seemed to me that perhaps—"

Morty Dane had been thinking of that too,

and that was one reason why he was not making as many objections as he might otherwise have been inclined to do, at the loss of a very efficient secretary. It had suggested itself to his mind that it would be nice to have Alfred take hold of the great work now. Then too a second reason lay in the fact that Bill had intimated that there was just such a place open at the moment as he had in mind for Calthrop, and the quicker his candidate took it, the surer he would be of it.

"Yes," he picked up Calthrop's train of thought, "I suppose I could work him in. My brother told me he had a place for you ready, and on that account I don't know but that I ought to let you go. I hope, however, you will make your home just the same with me here."

That was a suggestion of which Roger had not thought. In fact he was leaving Mr. Dane's for the very reason that he might not be at home there. He would go into Boston and take a room, and doubtless any future meetings he might have with Clare Manton would be very infrequent and casual.

"Oh, I could hardly think of that," he started to say.

"Nonsense, Roger," interrupted Morty. "That's one thing I shall insist on. Until fall at least. It's only thirty miles and the trains do it very easily."

Morty Dane seldom spoke cordially and it was hard to oppose him when he did. But Calthrop was in an exalted mood just then, fully prepared to be firm. The invitation he had not counted on and it was a temptation, but he realized that he stood at the parting of the ways.

"You are very, very kind," he said, "but I know you will understand, Mr. Dane, if I am anxious to give all my time to my work. I feel I should do better living in town."

Morty Dane looked disappointed. His invitation had not been wholly unselfish. There were certain threads of the great work that Calthrop held pretty well in his own hands and he had counted on the young man's occasional help.

"Then you must come down for the week ends, Roger," he said.

It occurred to Calthrop that the path of virtue was not an easy one. The memory of a tantalizing face bending toward his in the moonlight sprang up before him and for a brief second won upon him and drew him. The week-ends?—Saturday to Monday? If he could have them to look forward to, the days would fly by. He would have sacrificed to conscience by removing from Downham, and yet might not have to cut himself off entirely from that future that in moments of weakness seemed so utterly joyous.

But against that vision, there hurried through his mind the whole train of reasoning on which he had been dwelling for the last twenty-four hours—his indebtedness to the Dane family, his duty not to interfere with what he suspected were family plans of theirs, Clare Manton's sudden declaration the night before and the burden it cast on his honor to protect her from herself. For a moment his lips hardened and then there broke over them the smile that is one of the chief assets of worldly life—the expression of sympathy with those around you, but of sympathy detached;

that falls in for the moment with the desires opposed to yours, but leaves you free to do as you will. Roger's exalted mood was more or less in the ascendant, but he saw that this was the easiest way to carry out his determination.

"Very well, Mr. Dane," he said. "I will come down for the week ends, if you wish me, —when I am able. You think there will be a place for me?"

"Oh, surely—William was speaking to me of it only last week. I will call him up by telephone later in the evening."

And so Roger went out from the study, feeling well pleased with himself.

CHAPTER VI

"IT WAS NOT TO BE"

IT will always be the belief of certain pure and holy souls that true love comes straight from heaven. Indeed when we observe how life conspires to weave its charm over two young hearts, beautifying the world till nothing else but long day-dreams and hushed words and shy, stolen glances are fitting for it and them, does it not seem to be so?

How magic with unforgettable loveliness to Alfred Dane were those first weeks of July —magic with outward beauty and with the new inner life that was in him. The boy's eyes were full of soft, glorious laughter! His step was light and free and firm. The world stood out in rich colors about him, and to every experience that he encountered, his heart gave a meaning that it was never afterwards quite to lose. The days were cloudless and perfect, unmarred by that spell of intense heat which

often falls upon us around the Fourth of July, and the rich, cultivated landscape of eastern Massachusetts was at its best. Shadows lay across every rolling field and hill—shadows from dark woods and little copses and hedgerows, and the warm, golden, heavy air, saturated the mowing, cut and uncut, the occasional stands of grain, and the orchards, with blue, brown, and yellow tints. Everywhere that one went, the earth seemed brimming over with growth and beauty and life.

One afternoon, about three weeks after their first meeting, he and Phyllis Fearing were just descending a path leading down from her house through the garden to the river. It was the second time he had driven over and courageously turned in his car at the Fearings' drive, and once also he had encountered her in the streets of Bromesgrove, the neighborhood of which he haunted continually, and as not only had he on one of these occasions met her mother, but also seen the whole family once at church, it need not be stated that he and Phyllis had advanced long steps since their first glance at one another.

A moment earlier than this, however, a certain awkwardness had been holding him. From all his dreams and thought, and from all his ignorance of the other sex, Alfred was shy; and the same sort of thing was true in another degree of Miss Fearing. And just previously to this moment a slight misunderstanding had arisen between them.

"Perhaps you'd like to go down to see the garden?" Phyllis had asked after they had had tea on the piazza.

Alfred grew uncomfortable. Through some impulse of over-consciousness, it seemed to him that he caught a touch of indifference in her words, as if what she were proposing were for his benefit, not hers.

"I rather fear that I should be getting home to an engagement," he had answered tentatively.

There was nothing definite in his reply, and yet it served in its turn to irritate Phyllis. The moment, as all moments since she had met young Dane and when he was with her, was in a sense a constrained one, for through them all she was decidedly happy and excited, and

yet eager with all the reserve of her shy nature that she should not betray the fact.

"Oh, of course," she said with a laugh, "I mustn't keep you if you have anything to do."

She had meant the laugh and the words to sound amiably indifferent, but a touch of irritation which she could not keep out of them was caught by Alfred. For a moment again he hesitated, the idea coming to him as it was bound to just on account of his own delight when he was with her, that perhaps he was forcing his talk or his society on her. The next something made him pass beyond this thought and say with a slight fling in his tone:

"I haven't anything to do. I was only afraid that I was boring you."

Then Phyllis's heart had leaped and her cheeks had grown pale.

"You are not boring me at all," she said quietly, her face turned away.

Matching hers, a great throb of joy burst up in Alfred's heart. For the first time they had each seemed to penetrate quite beyond the mask of pose and bearing that are inevitable in us all. And there therefore they had sat

for a minute in silence, looking away from each other, each tumultuously conscious of the sweetness of the revelation the other had made.

Finally Alfred had stood up.

"Why don't we go and see the garden, then?" he said gruffly, looking shyly in her direction, but not quite at her.

The color had swiftly flooded back into Phyllis's cheeks, but she in her turn did not look directly at him. Instead, she too got up and slowly went with him down the steps and onto the path.

In their sweet isolation of emotion they were indifferent to the scene about them, and only dimly conscious of the pretty glimpse of the river gleaming through a fringe of white birches and the formative garden, half completed, half as yet unsatisfactory, leading down to it. We all know what a touch of *amantium iræ* does, and for a moment they walked in silence side by side, throbbingly alive to one another's presence.

"Wouldn't you go with me some day over to Rye to luncheon?" he asked, softly, at last turning to her.

The idea had been running through his head for some days, perhaps on account of an excursion which his family had taken a week earlier in the direction named. Every precious thing, when the feelings are at all stirred toward one person, serves only to remind us of him or her, and as Alfred on that occasion had bowled along with the rest through the quaint towns of Essex, along the marshy coast of New Hampshire and on to the bold headland of Little Boar's, with its incomparable sweep of ocean, he had longed to go through the same scenes with Phyllis beside him. A day with her alone along the beautiful ever-changing coast—that was the golden idea, that, checked and intensified by countless misgivings as to its propriety and her concurrence, had been pulsing through his heart and crying for utterance. And now he had spoken.

She looked up at him, and now again with soft, laughing eyes.

"I should love to," she said.

"We might go even as far as the Wentworth, if you liked," he added, gazing into her eyes, his heart throbbing with happiness.

"Wouldn't that be too far?" she asked, the touch of pink deepening in her cheeks.

"Let me get the road-book and see. I have one in my car, and if you'll wait for me a minute, we can look it up together."

He started to go back. But his feet hung reluctant, and his eyes seemed unequal for a minute to tearing themselves away from hers. Laughingly at last, she nodded to him to go.

"I'll wait for you here," she said softly, "and then we'll sit on the bench and work it out."

He ran swiftly back to where he had left his car in the drive, found the Blue Book and hurried back again down the garden. Phyllis was walking slowly the path toward a bench placed by the river under some willows, and there they sat down.

"It's twenty-four miles to the Farragut, and thirty-three to Newcastle," said Alfred in a hushed voice, when he had found the route. "Don't you make it so?"

"And we could come back inland through Exeter and the Hamptons—it is quite different scenery that way, and yet so pretty," she

answered with a touch of the same intensity in her voice.

"How jolly that will be! You don't think it will be too far then? Let's look up the Exeter route."

"Mother and I have driven over—you go through Stratham to Exeter, and then you can come back either by Amesbury or Hampton —there they are on the map—see!"

"When can you go? I hope it will be just such a perfect day as this."

Their words and many others that they spoke were very commonplace, and they were poring over one of the vulgarest of volumes—a volume that flashes by our eyes from so many dust-covered, packed motors, that greets us so inopportunely at hotel tables, and seems to be the vade-mecum of such unalluring and unlovely people that really its blue covers suggest anything but poetry and romance. And yet, as Alfred Dane and Phyllis Fearing sat with it between them, they were breathing the golden ether of heaven. The commonplace words were spoken, as they were due; but their inmost beings were in reality quite unconscious

of their utterance. The heart of lovely summer was about them, and they were both dwelling in the heart of life. Their heads bent close together at moments over the book, their fingers often came perilously close to touching as one or the other turned its pages, and from their eyes as they sought each other, now with a shy, guilty hastiness, now with a gaze of delicious all-but-unconsciousness when love made them bold, and they read the long, unspoken, throbbing, old, joyous story, with a delightful yearning. Oh, those lovely brown eyes of Phyllis Fearing, so melting, so burdened with tenderness, with such shy but intent girlish seeking, with such rich promise for life. How long and rapturously young Dane's looked into them, as the July afternoon with all its beauty slowly faded toward evening.

It was Tuesday then, and it was decided that the coming Friday would be the first available occasion for lunching together at the Wentworth. Dane was to pick Phyllis up in his car at half past ten of that morning, and as he drove home that afternoon, his heart was full of mingled impatience, delightful antici-

pations and the sweet quickened emotions of the last two hours.

But alas! it was not to be.

That evening there arrived at the Fearings' a letter from a certain Mrs. Ketcham—who was Phyllis's aunt—inviting her to go with her to Europe.

"I have hung about in the city till it's got so intolerably hot that at last I've made up my mind in a hurry to sail on Saturday," this lady, who lived in New York, wrote to her sister, Mrs. Fearing. "I did negotiate for a house somewhere near Tuxedo, but the people kept me dillydallying so long that it's too late now to try anything else of the sort—they kept it finally themselves—and so I've decided to go across. We shall stay a week or two in England, then go over to Switzerland for August, and come home by Paris, where I'll contrive to pick up some things for Phil this winter. Of course I know it's mean to take her away from you, Sis, but you've always promised the next time I went, she should go too, so here's your chance to make good to your dear old sister. I'll expect her Thursday if you

possibly can do it, but Friday at the latest—the *Caronia* sails at ten Saturday morning."

The letter was opened at the Fearings' dinner-table, Mrs. Fearing having reached home at that hour for the first time.

"Well, this is somewhat sudden, isn't it?" said that lady, looking up from the letter when she had finished reading it aloud. "Gus always did make her plans quickly just like that. My dear little girl, do you think you can leave us for all summer?"

Phyllis was conscious at the moment of a dull, cold pain sinking down into her heart. Just announced as the project was, she foresaw at once in it an inevitableness from which there was no way of escape, and a certain anger arose in her at the unkindness of things. And yet more immediately at the front of her consciousness was a sense of alarm lest she should betray her feelings, and the determination that come what might, she must not do that.

"I don't somehow feel exactly like Europe, Mother," she said laughingly.

"We shall miss you fearfully, Phil," said her

father with a restrained shyness in his voice.

She knew from the way her father spoke that he took it for granted that she must go. Between the two existed that sure unspoken affection that fathers and daughters often have for each other, and if he who really would miss her looked on her going as inevitable, she saw that she might as well make up her mind to it. And she knew herself from many reasons that she was not going to be able to get out of the invitation.

"It's rather too bad, mother," she said, with the same lightness of tone, and yet with the pain growing sharper in her heart. "You know it's the first summer I've had in Bromesgrove, and everything's so beautiful about here. I never did care much about Europe."

"It'll be a good chance for you, dear. I shall be sorry to have you go, but then Aunt Gus is very lonely, and I suppose we ought to sacrifice our own pleasure for her just a little."

A picture came up in Phyllis's mind of Mrs. Ketcham—her Aunt Gus, who was a rich, whole-hearted, not over-cultivated widow, devoted to getting every ounce of pleasure out of

life, and she found it quite impossible to put any touch of loneliness into it.

However, she knew very well what her mother meant. Her aunt had married a successful New York lawyer, who had left her at his death something approaching a million, and in a general sort of a way it was understood that Phyllis, of whom Gus Ketcham was very fond, was to be her heiress. Yet it was understood also that this result was by no means so certain a one that it was not expedient for Phil to do pretty much what Mrs. Ketcham wanted meanwhile.

"It would be quite impossible to get ready in such a short time, Mother," she said quietly, a little more feeling perhaps showing in her tone as the inevitableness of the thing weighed down more on her and irritated her.

"Pshaw!" said Mrs. Fearing, "I never saw anything I couldn't get ready for, if I wanted to. Of course, you'll have to have some more thick things, and they're rather hard to get hold of at this time of the year. But when there's a will, there's always a way, and I'll guarantee to have you in good shape to start

by Friday—I'll write Gus you can't get over till then."

All this time Phyllis had been more or less conscious that her brother Fred's eyes had been studying her. It was unusual for Fred not to have spoken earlier at so important a crisis, and she had a sense of nervous uncomfortableness under his observation.

"It seems to me, Phil, it's rather a shame for you to go," he said quietly, his keen eyes from beneath their half-closed lids turned toward her to watch the effect of his words. "Here we've just picked out this stand in Bromesgrove, you know, and I think it's important to stick to it, till we've made good. Don't you, Mother?"

Phyllis's lips pressed a little together as she felt her brother's eyes turned on her. Yet she was anxious to see what her mother would say. Fred's words, she was well aware, had a good deal of weight in that quarter.

"Of course, Freddy dear, you're right. But a month or two won't make any difference, and I do think Aunt Gus, from what she said to me when I was over at Easter, would feel very

badly if Phil didn't accept her invitation."

Phyllis could see all her brother was thinking, particularly when he made his next remark.

"Oh, well," he replied to his mother, seeing, like a wise general, that delay would be on his side, "Phil needn't decide this minute."

"By the way," he added, turning to his sister, "I hear your new admirer was over this afternoon."

Phyllis flushed, not so much with embarrassment, as with vexation. Fred laughed when she made him no reply.

He had devoted no small thought to the study of his sister during the last few weeks. Eager as he was for the new possibility of which many things during that time had made him think, he had been at a loss to know how to treat it in a furthering, but brotherly fashion. It would not do wholly to ignore it, he thought; and he had therefore adopted a tone of banter to which Phyllis would not have objected, had it not been for an underlying tone of meaning running through it. Closely as she knew her brother, she could not help having

it continually forced home on her that he was fearfully anxious that something should come of this new acquaintanceship they had made. And the coldness and vulgarity of it made her deeply troubled.

That was where Fred made his great mistake. Like most vulgar people, he overdid matters. Phyllis, he should have known, was the only uncontaminated nature in a family of climbers. Sweet, wholesome, reserved, it did not matter to her—except in ways of which she was only dimly conscious—that Alfred Dane was as well-placed, and nearly as rich a youth as was likely to be run across in America. The interest she had in him—she had not yet acknowledged even to herself that she had this interest—was as yet a pure, very delicate, unhandled romance to her young heart, and to be continually reminded as she was—not so much by words as by general attitude—that her brother and her mother tensely, eagerly approved of the acquaintance—stirred all her nature into rebellion. She felt at times that she would be pleased never to see Dane again. When Alfred had called and she had intro-

duced him to her mother, she had been ill at ease, and only at those times when he and she had been alone, had the subtly irritating consciousness of a faint ugliness about things left her. It was Fred Fearing's business to have known this, and so to have contrived matters—for it was he that was behind it all—that the family willingness in the affair was not quite so apparent.

No more was said just then, and Phyllis contrived to get away by herself for a few minutes after dinner. She had much of that disposition easily adjustable to circumstances which is so necessary to women; but now all her heart was sad with the prospect ahead of her. She had dreamed more than she knew during the last two weeks of Alfred Dane, and the more she had dreamed of him and the more she had seen of him, the more a sweet, unconscious conviction of his fatefulness for her, had come to her. He was not the sort of man, probably, she would have imaged to herself beforehand; and she had already had her opportunities of meeting plenty of young men of different types, some of whom had revealed to

her, in one degree or another, that they liked her. But she had remained indifferent for the most part till now. Something approaching a deep romance had, however, in the last two weeks softened and made beautiful the world for Phyllis Fearing in her turn, so that her heart was joyously, if shyly, alive, and the future seemed beckoning to her—ah, with such soft, rich, golden promise. And now she had got to tear herself away from it all!

The thought served for one thing to make her more conscious of the sweetness. She stood for some time in her unlighted room looking out of her window toward the garden into the warm, starlit night breathing of flowers, and her heart beat throbbingly. Oh, if she could only stay there, if Fate only would be kind to her, if she only might be allowed to go, on Friday, with Alfred Dane, and then let the days afterward come stealing on, laden with beautiful things, as she felt and wanted to feel that they would come; if she could only stay on in that sweet throbbing atmosphere where the merest happenings must inevitably have a delight and a loveliness about them! It

seemed pitiable to her, it seemed unbelievable, that life should not be on the side of such joy —that when things might be so lovely, the world should not fulfill their possibility.

Yet the sweetness of her dream made her realize the inevitableness of its shattering at the hands of an unkind fate. To get out of going to Switzerland with her aunt she saw no way, unless—. But the very thought of revealing her motives for wanting to stay to her mother made all the world seem horrid to her, and she turned away from it with a feeling of angry disgust. The best consolation she could give herself was that after all she was going only for a couple of months, and that perhaps when she came back—. But she shook her head sadly and doubtfully, dimly feeling that there was a greater momentousness about her departure than at the moment appeared. And yet—she could not help thinking—perhaps—he would understand that she was sorry to go. She would write him just as soon as it was decided, at any rate—and her thoughts began to turn to the letter, and how she would phrase it.

When Phyllis went down stairs again a little later and stepped into the library, she saw that her mother and Fred had been talking things over. They were sitting close together, and her brother was speaking in a low, impressive voice, with certain faint gestures of his hands to emphasize his meaning. The conversation ceased abruptly when she entered.

"Come here, dear, and sit down," said her mother, patting a near-by chair, and smiling ingratiatingly. "I want to talk a little more about your going with Aunt Gus."

"Dear me!" laughed Phyllis, with a slight tightening of the lips. "Still thinking about it, Mother? You needn't—I know you want me to go, and I am quite ready to."

"My dear little girl," said Mrs. Fearing, putting her matronly fingers over Phyllis's more slender ones, as she sat down, "that is not quite the way in which we want to look at it, I think. I do indeed think that your aunt will be disappointed if you do not accept her very kind invitation, but on the other hand, she, as well as we all, would be very sorry if our insisting on your going should make you unhappy."

Phyllis sharply and suddenly withdrew her hand from under her mother's. There were occasional moments when something about the latter jarred upon her fearfully.

"Don't worry about my being unhappy," she said with another cool laugh. "If you think it best, I am quite ready to go and have the time of my life."

"But, Phyllie dear," said the older woman insistently, "I fear you are not looking at it seriously enough. The pleasure one gets out of such a trip is of course very nice, but we all have to think at times of other things. Now if there is special reason why you would rather not leave Bromesgrove this summer—"

Then a touch of anger crept over Phyllis. She saw Fred bending forward in his chair, and though he pretended to be very uninterested, he was watching her keenly. She realized too from what her mother had said that they had been talking her over, and her whole nature rose in resentment.

"Why should I have any special reason for not wanting to go?" she said, turning slowly but weightily on her mother.

That lady hesitated, taken aback by the fierceness of the look.

"I don't know, dear—" she began uncertainly.

"See here," put in Fred at that point for the first time, "we're just beginning to see a little of people around here, and it does seem to me a pity, you know, for you to cut it all just now."

It was diplomatically put, but there are times when considerateness of phrasing is more irritating than more direct speech. To be considerate is sometimes to show an intimacy with another's mind that is intrusive.

"It needn't affect you, Fred," she said, turning her eyes coolly on him. "You can go right along seeing all you want of them."

Then Fred forgot himself.

"Alfred Dane doesn't come over to see me, Phil, you know," he remarked irritably.

The next minute he would have bitten his tongue out not to have said the words. His sister slowly turned her head and fixed her eyes square upon him—intense haughtiness in

them now, and a certain look of fight about the lips. Lovely and sweet as was Phyllis Fearing, there were possibilities of venom in her, as in most of her sex and race.

"What, please, do you mean, Fred?" she asked with perfect quietness.

A hush fell upon both mother and son at the sound of Phyllis's voice.

"He's a very fine fellow—you can't help liking him," said Fred after a second, feeling he must say something, and yet cursing his foolishness.

Phyllis swallowed something in her throat, but succeeded only in half concealing the anger in her eyes.

"Mother," she said, turning to Mrs. Fearing, and making it evident that it was only her feeling of filial respect that kept her from including her too in her anger, "let me say something to you both. I detest Mr. Dane from the bottom of my heart. He persists in coming to see me, and I've been civil to him, but he is a stupid, uninteresting bore. If you are thinking of my tearing myself away from him,

let me remark that it will be quite easy—and also very agreeable to me. As for you, Fred —you disgust me."

The girl's eyes, awakened to full power, flashed fire on the two people before her, each of whom wanted to steal a glance at the other to ask if it was true, but did not dare under the castigation of her look.

"I don't know why we should make such a fuss about such a little matter," Phyllis went on, her words now pouring forth in an eager flood. "It did seem a bore, just as I was beginning to know the country about here, and when the summer was so cool and beautiful, to leave Bromesgrove, but it'll be here when I come back in September, I suppose, and I shan't pine away meanwhile in Switzerland. As far as any other meaning you may impute to me, you are quite wrong, to say nothing of being utterly and stupidly foolish and horrid. As for Mr. Dane, let me ask that you will never mention his name again in my presence. Now, Mother, all you have to do is to say whether it shall be Thursday or Friday—I can get ready

to go over to New York on either day you wish."

The two people before her were left gasping, Fred at any rate gathering enough from her words to make him tell himself with another fierce oath that he had very likely spoiled an affair that was all but completed. He had dealt with his sister before, and knew that in certain matters she was unmanageable to the point of obstinacy, and from that moment on, he gave up any idea of achieving his ends.

"Don't bite your nose off to spite your face, Phil," was all he could think of to say.

Phyllis got up from her chair and drew herself up to her full height.

"I'm going to leave the room, Mother," she remarked freezingly. "If you will kindly decide which day you prefer, I will promise to be quite ready."

With that she walked with dignity out of the door. Once in her room, however, with the key turned behind her, and her mood utterly changed. She threw herself onto her bed, and burst into a fit of fierce crying. All

her being was shaken by what had happened, and though she would have died rather than let anyone know it, now that she was alone, her sobbing was almost hysterical.

It was not wholly on account of her love affair about to be shattered, that she wept so fiercely. The image of Alfred Dane had got for some reason or other pretty deeply imprinted on her mind, to be sure; and she thought of him continuously, and of what he would think, and whether she would ever see him again, as she lay there sobbing on her bed. But like most girls of her age—Phyllis was only twenty-one—she was chiefly in love with love. And now in the last two hours, a very lovely dream that had somehow fulfilled most of the demands of her maiden fancies, had come suddenly into sharp conflict with the hardness and shrewdness and ambition of the world; and she had had to put on her woman's armor and fight, and slay sincerity and kindness and happiness, and turn on those who were very near to her, in an endeavor to protect her ideals. And what she was really weeping for therefore, rather, was the tumult

of her heart, and the wounds that had been made in its lovely young hope and trust. Ah, who has not wept with her at the perception of the sad little, drab little changes life forces us all to make in our faiths! What faces do not bear signs of the changed perceptions and expectations from the world of those behind them!

Phyllis Fearing, however, being true gold, was not a girl likely to weaken, now that she had seen what her not going to Europe would be held to mean. Late that night she sat gazing very quietly and dreamingly at a note she had just written to Alfred Dane, and congratulating herself on its very non-committal superficiality. And the next morning when she went up to Boston to make some purchases, she took it with her there and posted it, in that way making sure that no one of her family should know that she had had occasion to write to Alfred. For the possibility of their having any part whatever in her heart's life was now very terrible to her.

It was a very breezy little note, written in a girl's best and most chatty manner, and Al-

fred Dane indeed would have been cleverer than he was, could he have guessed from its words that there were tears behind them.

"Dear Mr. Dane," Phyllis wrote. "Isn't it shameful the way things delight in showing their perversity! I'm just as sorry as I can be, but within two hours after you made that delightful proposal for our excursion to the Wentworth, a letter came from a wretched aunt of mine—she's really a dear, and very fond of me—asking me to go to Switzerland with her on Saturday. I'm awfully afraid it's one of those invitations that are also commands; in fact I'm leaving here for New York early Friday morning, though in many ways, do you know, I think Newcastle would be much more interesting than Lucerne. The only good part of it is, however, that the trip is a short one of two months, and that I expect to be back in September. I hope you will not think I am presuming if I venture to wonder if the Wentworth or the Farragut makes a very long season in the autumn. Thank you ever so much for asking me this time, dear Mr.

Dane, and believe me, Regretfully, but sincerely, Phyllis Fearing."

Once posted, Phyllis began to hope that she should see Alfred again before she left. It would be quite in order that on receipt of the letter he should hurry over to say good-bye, and though she had fiercely stated that he was distasteful to her, it would yet be perfectly natural that she should not refuse to see him. The meeting, in spite of the disagreeableness that her family had now contrived to throw over everything, would be sweet, and she dreamed long of it, and of what she should say, and of what he would, and was waiting for and expectant of it all the time through Thursday evening.

But the letter, posted Wednesday noon, did not reach Downham Hundreds till Thursday morning, at a time when Alfred Dane had left the house to go in his turn to Boston, whence it so happened he did not return until into the evening. He did indeed then think of betaking himself to Bromesgrove, but there was a tone about Phyllis's letter which he could not

quite understand, and his ideas at the receipt of it were all quite shaken and unfixed. So though he got out his car and drove by the Fearings', he did not go in, and the next morning when Phyllis went by the Downham station and caught sight of the big house of Mortimer Dane on the hill, she had heard nothing from him who was to have driven her on that day over to Newcastle, and with whom she was to have had such a long breath of delight. It was therefore with a little haughtiness that she looked out of the window at the landscape and surveyed people entering the car, and she gave an inaudible sigh as the train got in motion again, and said to herself that she must no longer think of what had passed as more than a closed episode.

She did, however, find some roses aboard the *Caronia,* and a note from Alfred, who on Friday had called up the Fearings' house and asked on what steamer she was sailing. But the note was rather stilted and non-indicative —Alfred's literary talents though considerable had not yet been developed in affairs of the heart—and therefore disappointing to Phyllis.

Perhaps she recognized, however, that his formal words did not express all he felt. At any rate the note left her material for curiosity and still further dreams, and she could not help dwelling therefore as she started out on the trip, and for some time thereafter, on his image.

CHAPTER VII

ALFRED'S FATE

NOW that Phyllis Fearing had gone to Switzerland, and Roger Calthrop had betaken himself to a room at Winthrop, whence he went daily to his work in Boston—which he did in the week following his conversation with Mortimer Dane—a very natural thing happened in the history of the four people whose fortunes we have been observing. Alfred Dane and Clare were thrown a great deal together.

As her mother had remarked, Margaret Dane, the older of the two sisters, was too much like Alfred to attract him much. He talked with her often about books and with interest, but it was to Clare that he turned for the satisfaction of a new impulse that since his meeting with Miss Fearing had arisen in him.

As for Clare, she cleverly built up the intimacy, not only in accord with her consciously

formed plan, but also through a certain pleasure to herself. She had said "piffle" at the end of her first meeting with her cousin, and she still continued in a sense to laugh at him—particularly when she compared him with another man whose image she was always seeing. But still there were certain virtues in Alfred which on further acquaintance she learned to know and appreciate, so that a certain side of her woman's heart grew half fond of him.

Time went on thus through the weeks of July and August, with a somewhat busier and gayer air lying over Downham Hundreds than had lain there for many a year—some few dinners and teas and greater gatherings taking place; but more than that, for Alfred Dane an almost constant companionship with his cousins. His old habits of reading were nearly forgotten. He lived much in the open air. With both of them, but particularly with Clare, he walked and drove and motored over all the pleasant country for many miles about. He sailed and played tennis and golf and lounged and chatted and altogether entered into a new life, finding his old satisfactions more or less

outgrown and fresh desires rising in him till at last one day something happened that might have been expected as the logical culmination of all this intimacy.

On a certain afternoon in mid-August he met Clare coming down the stairs with her parasol in her hand, evidently going for a walk.

"May I go too?" he said excitedly at the sight of her. For some reason, he thought, she had avoided him during the morning, and he had been decidedly intrigued by the fact and made anxious to be with her again.

"Come on," said she, throwing her keen eyes on him for a second. "I'm off for a walk anywhere—it isn't hot enough to matter where."

He seized his hat and held the door open for her.

"I was looking for you before luncheon," he said.

"Sorry—was busy in my room all the morning writing letters. One has to keep in touch with the world, you know."

"How pretty you look, Cousin!" he remarked, having got into the way of letting fall these little trifles, and doing it with more skill

than he could have commanded when he first began.

She laughed and turned her eyes on him.

"Really," said she, "you're doing wonders, Alfie. Which way shall we go?"

"Let's make for the old lane. Though it's immaterial to me so long as we go together."

He spoke with a kind of forced laugh and Clare now perceived his excitement. She shrugged her shoulders to conceal a wave of emotion that went over her. It seemed to her that the time had at last about come for something to happen.

"You have improved a good many hundred per cent since I first came to Downham," she said, smiling at him graciously.

Alfred was conscious, as he looked back at her, of something about her intensely suggesting a girl's preciousness. She was his cousin, and they were on familiar terms now, and yet always when he was with Clare, he felt a charm and a remoteness from himself that made her seem increasingly desirable. And just now, a sense of her daintiness and difference came to him and made him—he did not put it just

so, or realize exactly what it meant—desire to master her.

They went over the fields that rolled away from Downham in the direction of the distant sea, and after rounding an old barn with the last winter's salt hay exuding from its cracks, and the wholesome stable odor coming forth from it, followed some cart tracks that gradually sank between higher land on either hand of them and formed a narrow lane. The apple trees from the raised banks on either side shaded them, and rustled faintly in the western breeze. The crop was in good condition and the boughs were beginning to bend beneath the weight of the waxing russets and baldwins. About on a level with their faces was the long, slazy grass of the orchards, sweet here and there with clover, and ahead of them stretched away the cart path, glimpsed beneath the checkering apple leaves, till, some quarter of a mile farther, it entered a darker grove of pine leading toward the sea.

"Why so silent, Alfie dear?" said Clare, mockingly, after they had gone some hundred or two yards, and in response to her own chat-

ter her cousin seemed all but wholly untalkative. She knew very well in her own mind what the matter was, and inwardly was wickedly and gloriously laughing at the state in which she perceived his consciousness to be. The air seemed to her electric with something about to happen—something that was to fulfill all her plans.

"Will you let me hold your hand, Clare?" he said, growing red in the face as he moved nearer her.

"Hold my hand, Alfie!" she echoed. "My word, what a naïve request!"

"May I not?" said he, reaching for her fingers.

She drew them away from him, but it is only fair to say that, seeing it was a form of play which Clare had once or twice before been guilty of encouraging, before many steps forward he had them in his own.

"Don't be silly," she said, with a queer sort of laugh.

She was more or less excited nevertheless herself, and she knew from his eyes and laughing lips that he was very much so.

"Do you think it is?" said he.

Yet had the boy been more calm, perhaps he would have noticed that Clare's complexion, in spite of her laugh and her alertness, was quite normal and untouched, and that her eyes were very cool.

She had been walking with a quick step and they were approaching a spot where the lane, leaving the orchards behind, entered the open for some forty yards before entering the pine wood.

"You'll have to drop it now, or all the world will see us," she remarked as they got nearly to that point.

"There is not a soul in sight," he said, looking hastily behind and around him.

Nevertheless Clare made him drop her fingers as they crossed the open space. But she did it in such a way as only to lead him on the more, and when they were once under the shelter of the pines, he took her hand again more boldly. Clare seemed to him infinitely desirable just then and all the traces of her intangibility of sex and individuality—her walk, a faint, sweet perfume about her, the black rib-

bon in her hair—carried him away. For a few paces he was silent, and then he took a step in front of her, and seized her other hand with the closed parasol crushed within it.

"Clare—Clare—" he faltered.

Even Clare's coolness gave a little start at that. Just for a second she lost her sense of calculation, and sympathized with him and was drawn to him. The next, however, she turned her eyes to his inquiringly and provokingly.

"Well, Alfie?" she said, with beating heart.

"Will you marry me, Clare?" he said in a low voice, drawing her in a little toward him.

It had come, it had come at last—that of which she had been thinking and for which she had been scheming for the last six weeks, and Clare's excitement and elation were perhaps no less decided, though for different reasons, than were the more natural ones of her cousin. She did not give him an answer in words, and her eyes were turned demurely away from him —which very likely was good tennis. But she let him draw her almost to him and kiss her lips once in the tide of his rising passion—a complaisance which he took and was meant to

take as a favorable response. And then with a quick motion and a laugh, she broke away from him, and flushed and extremely pretty now, stood a second in front of him, looking into his eyes mockingly.

"There—quite enough, Alfie. You didn't really mean what you said, did you?"

"But I did—Clare—I did mean it."

He had reached for her hands again in his elation, but though she let him take them, she contrived to prevent any further caresses. Instead she looked at him with all her eyes full of laughter.

"You dear boy," she said with her clear, ringing voice, "you mean you really like me. No—no—quite enough for a beginning, I'm sure. If you really mean it, let's talk it over like sensible old engaged people."

She had added her last sentence hastily as once again in his eagerness he had tried to answer her not in words.

The final phrase came as a slight surprise to him. Yet he found he was almost pleased with it. For one brief second when he had taken the fateful step, a great shock of ques-

tion had reached him. As if blown to him on a whiff of sea air which at that moment reached his nostrils, the image of Phyllis Fearing had flashed into his mind. The touch of Clare's lips, the sense of her hands joined to his, the next had driven the picture far away, and yet even at that moment when he looked at his cousin, fascinating, alluring, before him, and realized that he had won her and that she was to be his, a vague sense of regret mingled with the feeling.

He had only half intended to say what he had said to Clare. Increasingly appealing to him as she had been through the last weeks, it had been all along in quite a different way from his feeling for Phyllis Fearing. He had never ceased to recognize a superiority in the attraction of the latter, nor had he ever acknowledged in his most smitten moments that Clare had won any place equal to that he instinctively accorded to the girl he had met on the river.

Yet on the other hand he had known after all that he was very likely to say some such thing to his cousin. She had been growing

more and more interesting and more and more delightful to him, and he had been dimly aware that some fine day, when the right moment came, he was going to yield to the feeling and do just such a thing as he had now done.

Perhaps if Phyllis Fearing had been nearer the scene, it would have been different, though Clare's propinquity would have been always dangerous, and would have made the loyalty of an inexperienced youth like Dane somewhat uncertain. But Phyllis had now abandoned the field, and so brief and without connecting links had their acquaintanceship been that at moments she seemed to him almost a dream. On the other hand when under the power of his memory of her, as he was at very many other moments, he was inclined to resent a little the abruptness of her taking herself off, and a feeling that he would like to show her he did not care, served to make him somewhat more indifferent to what might happen with Clare. And so he after all did feel that when the time came, the deterrents to yielding to her attraction would be insufficient to prevent his doing so.

And under Clare's fostering aid, so it had proved. Clever girl too that she was, it was not likely that he was to be allowed now to forget his words, as was very evident a couple of hours later when the two, back from their walk, appeared on the covered piazza at the Hundreds, where it so chanced the whole family were gathered together. Clare did not actually suggest that her fiancé should take the occasion of announcing the matter to their assembled relatives, but on the other hand she had made some such remark as this when they had caught sight of the company.

"My word, Alfie, if we wanted a full house to make our début as lovers before, heavens, wouldn't we have it! I'll wager you'd never have the courage to take it."

Alfred was excited, and indeed, his bravery was not of the sort that would have particularly feared such an encounter.

"Do you think it's the proper occasion?" he replied, throwing her a tender glance.

Clare shrugged her shoulders, and laughed tantalizingly. Inwardly she was a little nervous with it all.

"Would you really dare?" she asked confidentially.

Whereupon Alfred made straight for the piazza and with only a second's hesitation, went across and sat down beside Lou Manton.

"Cousin Lou," he said, pausing just an instant to get his breath, "I want to tell you that Clare and I are engaged to be married."

In the moment of dead silence that followed, he jerked his head round nervously to the others.

"I want to tell all the rest of you too," he said.

Lou Manton had grown pale at the announcement. She had not expected it just then.

But she recovered herself after an instant and looked calmly at Mortimer Dane.

"Morty," said she, "what do you think of these young people?"

"I think," said Mortimer Dane with perfect readiness, "that I am not surprised."

Then Clare, who had hung back a trifle, stepped forward into the circle and stood be-

fore them in all the daring of her laughing, sharp, but winning young eyes.

"Why, you sly Uncle Morty," turning them on the gentleman she addressed, "do you mean you have known it all along, when Alfred and I only discovered we liked each other this afternoon?"

That was not exactly what Morty had meant. He had intended to use as his own a passage in Schopenhauer which he had been reading that morning about Love, and to say that he was not surprised that a young girl whom Nature had equipped as she does all her creatures with the weapons and implements requisite for safe-guarding her existence, had succeeded in capturing the fancy of a future husband. But somehow at this moment it came over him, probably in the face of the glorious exemplification of it, that his theory was a little drab and unpleasant, and that he did not want to expound it just then.

"No, my dear Clare," he said, his eyes blinking a little at the wonder of things, "I do not say that. I hope—"

He hesitated a little, not being quite sure what he *should* hope.

"Well," said Dicky Dane laughingly, seeing his brother come to a halt, and feeling that some enthusiasm was due, "if your father won't say he's glad, I will, Alfred. Give me your hand, my dear boy. And Clare, haven't you a kiss for your uncle that is to be, but who isn't enough of an old bachelor not to envy Alfred his luck. He hopes you two, though, are going to be very happy together."

Then a stir of excitement began to move over the company as they realized what had happened.

"I think, Clare, my dear, it is time for a kiss all around," said Sarah Dane, going over to Clare and stooping to her to touch her lips to her cheek. "We are all very glad, dear, I'm sure."

"I'll give you a bit of advice with mine, Alfred," said Meg Manton, who was tall, rather grave, and wore spectacles—which gave her the look of having run unduly out to intellect. "Don't let Clare make you do what you don't want to—she'll be always trying and will suc-

ceed too if you don't look out. She's a dear sometimes, but a little selfish."

Alfred smiled with reserve at Meg's congratulations. But the thing that impressed him most was the matter-of-factness of everything. Somehow a few minutes before he thought he had done a big thing in winning Clare. But now it all seemed to be taken for granted so, the arrangement was settled into so easily, that a slight sense of disappointment came over him.

Nevertheless Clare, on whom the domesticity of the moment had just the opposite effect, signifying that the last barrier was past and that she was accepted by the family, was looking fairly radiant now, and a glance at her served to reassure him. She was a glorious and much-to-be-desired girl, his senses told him, and all his doubting feelings flew into the air away. It was only when he was by himself later on, that a picture of Phyllis Fearing suddenly rose in his heart, and gave it a sharp, sad little twinge. He hurriedly put it away from him, however, and called up in its place the exciting, delightful memories of the after-

noon. With them in his veins, he found he had little place for retrospect—the future was before him, and oh! how full it was to be, all his thought told him, of life and joy!

Clare, late that evening, sat by her window which overlooked the terrace garden, staring out into the night. Her heart was beating high with plans and dreams it had been forming of what life was to be in the future she had so successfully established, and her eyes, could we have seen them, were gleaming and lustrous with the promise of it all. She was looking, too, at the spot below where six weeks earlier she and Roger Calthrop had walked together between the box hedges, and had been congratulating herself that the stand she had taken then she had had strength to persist in. Yet mingled with her self congratulations, the spell of that night and of the man was everywhere in her thought as she sat there. Considering herself now out of danger, she had given herself up to it, and a joyous rapture held her at what had happened then. She laughed softly, as she thought of Roger's touch, his words, his kiss, and her heart was all alive.

"I couldn't have missed it for all the world," she thought radiantly. "I shall be sure to see him often now too. I wonder what he will think when he hears of it."

She was whistling softly to herself, as she went to bed, her heart very happy—too happy to differentiate, alas!—clever girl as she was—between the causes of her elation. She was thinking almost wholly of the man she had sent away from the house, and yet she thought she was so happy because she was engaged to marry his friend! Ah, poor Clare!

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE TOURAINE

ROGER CALTHROP had lived most of his life with richer people than he had any right to. The son of a country lawyer in an inland Massachusetts town, he had lost both parents before he was twelve. His father had left him an annual income of about a thousand dollars, and an aunt whose husband was his guardian and who was rather flattered by the boy's handsome, open, aristocratic face, thought that it entitled him to be sent to the best schools and to Harvard. He got in at St. Exoverton's with a set of men with whom he felt bound to keep up at Cambridge, and though he found it sometimes trying, on his income, he had managed to do it, helped out by presents from his uncle and aunt.

The experiment was justified in Roger's case in that he was not spoiled. He had gained

the advantage of a good acquaintance without the process impairing his realization that he had his own way to make in the world by hard work. He knew the world thoroughly, and yet was prepared to face it in a manly way when the time came.

By nature he was forceful, self-reliant, and courageous. A perfect physique and health had so far, it must be confessed, conduced to a certain indolence. He had the makings of a scholar in him—his father had been something of a classical student—and Roger had done the rather unusual thing for a man of his social opportunities of keeping up his Latin and Greek through his college years and taking honors in them. Had he been less ambitious, or had he been living in any other country but America, he probably would have followed out some professional or scholastic life. As it was, his unusual preparation and his acquaintance with Alfred Dane—who was a year behind him at Harvard—led naturally enough to his secretary's appointment with the latter's father. The place as far as it went was a good and congenial one, and fell in with his more

superficial, indolent, and scholarly tastes. But he had realized all along that it was only a moment's dallying before he plunged into the world of business where he had resolved to carve himself out a fortune.

He had run away hastily from Downham now because he had seen that in all ways it was the best and the safest plan. It hurried his start into business, to be sure, and made him begin in the summer months, which are not as a rule good ones. But it saved him and the family to which he was so much indebted from any possible complications.

He had not supposed that he was in love with Clare Manton. But he was interested in her. Events had conspired in fact with startling rapidity to make that interest unavoidable. And he had perceived from the first that she was not for him.

There had been something suggestive in the air to a man of Calthrop's perceptions ever since Mrs. Manton's first appearance in Downham. He had explained to himself the fact that he and Clare had got along so fast on the day of her arrival, in the face of this feeling,

by his having lost his head. But then he had seemed suddenly to develop the habit of losing his head! Clare Manton's declaration to him on the evening of their walking in the garden together had made things all the plainer, suggesting to him that a family alliance in the old-fashioned sense of the term was contemplated, and had served to emphasize pretty sharply what he was already feeling—that he must put any question of his further interference out of the possibilities. And so he had asked Mr. Dane for a place and had left Downham.

He had supposed that once away from life in the same house with her, and in the absorption of a new business, he would forget all about Clare. Their little "affair" had been the result, he had said, of accidental juxtaposition and the more or less leisurely life that one inevitably leads in the country. And so he had plunged into his new job with enthusiasm.

A certain satisfaction too came back to him. He found that he could master business details easily, and that what he had always felt was

true—he had insight, quickness, and cleverness greater than most, and an unusual power of adapting himself to people and winning them. He felt that within a moderate time he could do good things and gain what he wanted—money and position in the business world. His chance with Dane and Co. was unusually promising, or if that did not turn out well, he knew he could make himself valuable elsewhere.

Yet to his dismay he found that he did not have that satisfaction in his work he expected, and that though he had got himself out of the neighborhood of Clare Manton he had not got himself out of her influence.

"The selfish little flirt!" he exclaimed to himself with amusement, and yet with an underlying sense of irritation. "She doesn't care a straw for poor Alfred, nor for me either—she only wants to drag us both at her chariot-wheels. Why the devil, old man, should you let her make you in the slightest uncomfortable? She isn't even pretty, if you come to that."

He was not so sure of that statement, as

soon as he had made it to himself. Her face rose up to mock him. He could see her laugh, her teeth gleaming, the turn of her neck, and a little toss she gave her head when she spoke. Most of all, a touch of tenderness, of softened, joyous understanding of her attitude and forgiveness for it, sprang up to meet this picture in his heart, and he told himself with dismay that he was in danger of falling in love.

He had flattered himself that he was safe in such matters. He was the kind of man that most feminine eyes take to at once, and in return give a pretty good glimpse of themselves. He thought he knew girls and some women pretty well. He had flirted somewhat intensely with a dozen or a score of them and having thus got the key, now possessed insight and a certain sort of sympathy that helped him to understand the other sex. He told himself that he had little to fear from deeper affairs of the heart. He could hold himself well in hand in such matters. There were many breakers ahead, he had realized, for a man in his position, in love or marriage—the best way at any rate was for him to keep out

for some years to come. And now he had let himself become interested in a penniless girl, who, worse yet, was intended, or intended herself, for his friend Alfred Dane.

The situation was one to arouse all the fight in such a man as Roger Calthrop. He resolved that he would overthrow this feeling that had sprung up so inopportunely, that he would beat down this spreading trail of fire that threatened to eat up the secure possessions of calmness and honor and kindly friendship he had built up in his heart. He threw himself the more into his work, therefore, and for some three or four weeks resolutely kept himself away from Downham. Whereupon it happened that, naturally enough, he did find his equanimity of heart returning to him, together with an ability to look good humoredly on the episode as one safely closed.

"Poor girl," he thought to himself with kindliness—for he had by that time lost that sense of personal annoyance at his own weakness that had at first interfered with his customary chivalry of outlook—"I dare say she wanted to have her little fling before she tied herself

up. Alfred wouldn't be exactly an exciting choice, after all, for all his cash. What an infernally clever little charmer she is, though!—knows men down cold. Instinctive, I suppose—I don't think she can have had any great experience."

It was just at this time of supposed security that Mortimer Dane came into the office and, reproaching Roger for not having kept his promise to come down for the week-ends at Downham Hundreds, asked him to come for that next Sunday. And Roger, half feeling that he was cured, and finding it difficult also to refuse Mr. Dane's definite request for certain help on his work on the Latin poets that he alone could give, promised that he would come.

The Saturday and Sunday at Downham, as far as Roger was concerned, completely reopened all his supposedly healed wounds, and made him—he could not help recognizing the fact then—eagerly, madly in love with Clare. It so happened that he and she were left alone for a couple of hours on Sunday afternoon, and though there were no more kisses or that

sort of thing—Clare and Roger both felt a little ashamed of themselves for what had happened in that way—both were drawn together by that strong sense of mutual attraction which had held them from the first. Their conversation became markedly personal, and before the afternoon was through Roger, with conscious daring, had called Clare by her first name, and she, looking him straight in the eye with a look that belied her words, had told him that he had no right to do that. And poor Roger, when he got back to Boston Monday morning, had a worse flame than ever to beat down in his heart.

Perhaps he would have successfully done even this—for he was now conscious of all the momentous issues hanging on his conduct—had it been dependent on him alone. He showed he had good stuff in him by succeeding in keeping himself away from Downham, in spite of the tremendous temptation to go there for the next two Sundays.

On the Thursday following the second one—which was some week or more after Clare and Alfred had had their walk—the telephone on his desk in Dane and Company's office rang,

and Roger picked it up without any premonition of what was at hand.

"Is this Mr. Calthrop?" came an inquiry that gave him a sudden start.

"Yes."

"I don't believe you recognize my voice."

His heart leaped and then almost stood still, and it was a moment before he could recover himself sufficiently to speak. Not recognize it? When he had been hearing it continually, waking and sleeping, for the last two weeks! His strength for that minute seemed to leave him.

Yet he knew he must answer, and he controlled himself enough to speak in a matter-of-fact tone, and to remember the rule never to call a lady's name in the office.

"I think I do," he said cautiously.

"Humph. You are not enthusiastic. Isn't it about luncheon time with you?"

Then did his pulse beat fairly overwhelmingly. Just for a second he succeeded in bethinking himself that he was going into danger and that he ought to make some excuse and refuse. Just for the merest instant, however,

could such an idea persist before it was thrown to the winds in the face of his eagerness.

"Where shall I find you?" he asked in a low, tense voice.

A faint laugh sounded over the telephone.

"I'm at the Touraine, and it's fearfully hot here. Do come quickly."

"All right. I'll be there almost immediately."

He hung up the receiver, remarked to the telephone girl that he was going out to lunch, and hurried into the street. His eagerness was so great that when he came up to Washington Street, he hailed a passing taxicab, and calling out "The Touraine," threw himself into it.

He was conscious as the cab threaded its way through the traffic, that he ought to be making resolves and getting himself in hand. But he was doing nothing of the sort. A wild delight that she was close to him and that he was going to see her in a minute and that she had sent for him was the one thing that was in possession of his whole being.

Clare was waiting for him in the hotel office.

"Why haven't you been down to Down-

ham?" she asked, as they shook hands, a faint laugh in her tone.

He had spoken on that Sunday afternoon of his coming again, of course, but he knew very well why he had not kept his promise and knew that she knew too.

"Am I to take this as an indication that you have missed me?" he asked, laughing in his turn, a deep, bursting joy in his heart as his eyes sought hers.

"Yes—you know you were my one amusement."

She spoke coolly and the words hurt him unexpectedly. He had said to himself all along that she was only playing with him, and had called himself a fool when he had felt himself in danger of departing from that belief. A touch of fight showed about his lips now.

"Indeed!" said he—with a faint laugh, however. "Let's go in to lunch."

"You weren't very nice to me over the telephone," said Clare, once they were seated opposite each other in the corner of the dining-room. "I don't believe you wanted to come."

"I'm not so sure, if you mean that, that

your calling me up was a compliment," he remarked a little dryly. "How have you been faring down at Downham?"

Clare leaned forward insistently.

"Don't talk of horrid things, please. Tell me, did you want to come?"

The heat of the summer day was great, but Roger was unconscious of it. Vaguely, like an accompaniment, he was aware of the noise of the traffic on the street without coming in through the open window. A second before, she had angered him and made his heart sullen with almost a hatred of her. But now suddenly that feeling was all forgotten. He caught above the lace of her low-cut white frock the arch of her neck—it was one of Clare's good points—as she leaned a little toward him, and the turn of her head, and a great softness came into his heart. All the fight seemed to go out of him, a mist swam before his eyes, and he was carried sharply out of all control of himself. He raised his eyes toward her, and they had the look of a wounded animal in them.

"Terribly," he said in a low voice.

With all their appeal in them, they gazed into Clare's. He did not know what the latter answered him, but he had abandoned all his grip on himself now, and was carried on to speak.

"Why did you come, Clare?" he said, with a gentleness that perhaps no woman had ever heard him use before.

A faint touch of response entered Clare's eyes.

"You know you said you'd be down again the next Sunday," she said quickly.

The dining-room was but scantily filled in the hot midsummer day, and probably no human eye had noticed this drama of human life taking place in the corner.

"You can guess why I didn't, can't you?"

The look that had answered Roger's had already faded from Clare's features.

"Can I?" said she, with a laugh. "I don't know that I like guessing."

A feeling of angry revulsion came over Calthrop. She had been simply playing with him at this moment too, and she had made him reveal those wounds of his heart which he con-

sidered weak and unworthy, and which he hated. Before him he saw no longer the girl to whom he had just given up the strength of his strong nature, but only the keen, unrelenting, successful sportsman of the opposite sex.

"What strange creatures women are!" he flung out at her angrily, all his self-control overturned.

Then Clare's eyes flashed. Another feeling took possession of her in turn.

"At any rate," she said, "I believe they are not such cowards as men."

"You mean they don't care for consequences to others as much," he retorted hotly, his eyes seeking hers with hostility in them.

She paused a second before answering. Then she said slowly.

"They have at least the courage of their convictions."

Strange to say, her eyes now in their turn, as she looked at him met his, completely softened. Not a thing of all her gayety and pride and cleverness and mockery at that moment was left in them—only a soft appeal. It took

him a moment to realize that her laughter of the second before was unreal. Then a hush seemed to fall on him.

"Clare!" he cried in a whisper.

She did not answer his cry in words, but a look in her eyes, beseeching, submissive, gentle, told him all he wanted to know.

"Do you care?" he asked in the same awed, unbelieving tone.

Never in all his previous thought about her had he let himself consider any such thing for two consecutive seconds. He knew her, and her species, so well! he had said to himself; and never had he dreamed with any sense of belief under his dream that she cared for him save as the agreeable plaything of her skill. He could hardly believe it now, and yet with a sweet awe-inspiring power the belief was borne in upon him. Her eyes lingered on his, and for a long moment they seemed to read each other's souls.

Then suddenly a sound startled them from their absorption and turning they saw the waiter, impatient at their dallying, drawing up beside them. A clear, cool laugh broke from

Clare's lips, and when Calthrop looked back at her, every trace of feeling seemed vanished from her eyes.

"There," she said, taking up the card, "we haven't ordered a thing. We must have some salads, and ices and cool things, musn't we?"

It seemed unbelievable to him that such sharp, complete changes could come in any girl, and again his suspicions returned to him, and he swore at himself for a fool. But when they were alone together again, nevertheless, their eyes instinctively sought each other, the sense of *attendrissement* fell on them once more, and the hour that succeeded was one of unforgettable wonder for Roger. Clare mocked and laughed at him, indeed, and yet as she did so, her every look was one of caress or of appeal. He, on his side, gave himself up completely now to the spell, all resistance was past, and he hung upon her words, her looks, with all his heart melted into softness. They each seemed conscious of every thought, every motion of the other; their eyes would now sparkle, now sink into looks of long, clinging passion. Their words were here mutually

and softly mocking, there slowly stumbling and lost in the way to expression. They spoke of themselves—of their meeting, their thoughts, and, with disdain, laughed at that alien body, the rest of the world which was shut out from their mutual reminiscences; they gave glimpses of their attitude to one another that seemed wonderful and meaning and sweet to the recipient; and all through they felt the soft joy of being drawn toward each other without the power or wish for resistance. The hour went by as a minute, yet doing the work of years upon the hearts that gave themselves to each other there in the hot, commonplace hotel dining-room.

All through, however, enough of Calthrop's discernment had remained to make him aware of a certain reserve on Clare's part. An instinct warned him that though her surrender to him for the moment was complete, he must not count on it to last long. Nevertheless, probably he was not quite prepared for what happened at the end of the luncheon.

A faint sigh came from her lips as she laid her napkin on the table,—only to be extin-

guished, however, in a laugh and shrug of the shoulders. For Clare, having had her play, was now calling up all her cool young cynicism to her help to enable her to do what she was going to do.

"I wonder," said she, looking very coolly at him, "if you know what's happened at Downham?"

Strange to say, Calthrop did know at that very instant. A great revulsion swept over him, and his feelings told him the very thing that she was going to say. A look of tension came to his lips that Clare remembered afterwards.

"You must forgive me for this—I wanted to come so," she said coolly. "Alfred and I are engaged and are to be married in October."

"Indeed," said he, rather monotonously; "I congratulate you."

She rose from the table.

"Please don't take it in that way," said she. "You know I told you that night in the garden."

"Oh, yes," said he, "you told me all right.

I hope I've furnished you enough amusement this noon."

Clare's heart was beating pitiably just then, and she was forced, quite contrary to any expectation she had had, to suppress a little sob.

"I don't think I quite understood what I was doing," she said slowly. "I hope you will forgive me—Roger."

She added his Christian name for the first time in their acquaintance, for just then she wanted to do something to show him she was sorry. A great wave of tenderness and compassion for him and for herself swept over her heart, and for the first time in her life, perhaps, her eyes were free from coquetry and absolutely sincere as they turned to his.

"Oh, yes, I forgive you," he replied, his tone quite devoid of meaning.

He followed her out of the dining-room without further words, and Clare, overcome by the emotions she had summoned up, had not the heart to turn to speak to him. Neither did they linger in the hotel, but went straight out to the sidewalk, where Clare said she would

take a cab to the station. When he had helped her into it, she looked out at him with an expression of deep appeal in her eyes.

"I couldn't help it," she said in a low voice. "I wanted so to see you. And yet I didn't know—I didn't realize. Can't you forgive me?"

He bowed in a non-committal way and raised his hat. The vehicle was already in motion, and it was in that attitude that she had a last look at him, before it plunged across the street.

"Part of the same old game," he said to himself bitterly, his lips stiffening, as he turned away without further look at the cab.

As he went back to Devonshire Street, he felt crushed and lifeless. But on his reëntering the office something happened that quite effectually changed the current of his mind.

"The old man's been looking for you for an hour, Calthrop," said one of his clerks, coming up to him. "Slide in there devilish quick, if you don't want to get fired."

The man gave him a shove toward William Dane's private room, and Roger, though with little heart for work, conscious that he had

transgressed in his noon hour, hurried into it. But the business on which the head of the house wanted him was of just the sort to pull him up sharply at that moment. He was offered the chance to be one of two men sent over to establish a branch of Dane and Co. in London.

It was an unusual and advantageous opportunity for a man connected with the house for so short a time, and had come to Calthrop through Dicky Dane's recommendation to his brother of Roger's social qualities. He had the sort of training, said Dicky, that would make him fit in well in England. It was a new venture with Dane and Co.—only three other Boston houses had London branches—and everybody recognized that its way was to be smoothed by diplomacy as well as by business. So the house had offered the place to Roger, and the latter, with a sigh of satisfaction at the opportuneness of its coming, clutched at it as a drowning man would clutch at a raft, and accepted it.

He was to leave the first of October, after he had familiarized himself with certain details at Boston. And he said to himself that it had

come as the solution of his mix-up with Clare Manton, and a certain belief in Providence occurred to him.

CHAPTER IX

"THE STREET"

ON the succeeding Monday afternoon Alfred Dane entered the office on Devonshire Street, consecrated to the financial operations of his family, and throwing his eye over the many desks, perceived bent over one of them the head of his friend Roger Calthrop. Toward this desk, he proceeded to make his way.

"Hullo, Roger," he said, when he had got to it.

Calthrop looked up startled, and the expression of his mouth vaguely hardened a little.

"Hullo," he said impassively, "what are you doing here, Alfred?"

"I wanted to have a talk with you. Can't you come out to luncheon with me?"

Calthrop lowered his head as if to look at some papers on his desk. He knew very well

what Dane had come to have a talk with him about, and a feeling of sharp pain shot through him at the thought. And mixed with this was a duller sense of irritation and opposition.

"I don't know," he said discouragingly. "We're fearfully busy here this morning."

Alfred gave a good-natured laugh.

"Why, you old wretch, of course you can, if you want to. It's something awfully important, and I positively won't take 'no' for an answer. Come—I'll wait for you as long as you say, Roger."

Calthrop felt he knew the cause that was behind his friend's unusually buoyant tone, and again his heart burned with a dull sense of sickness. But he saw that he must go through with what Dane wanted and bear it like a man.

"Sit down," he said, pulling out a chair and offering it to Alfred with as much graciousness as he could command. "I think I can manage it in ten or fifteen minutes, if you're willing to wait that long."

"Take your time," said Alfred, accepting the chair. "I always like to look around here, you know. Uncle Bill in to-day?"

"Yes," said Roger grimly, pointing toward an inner office. "But I wouldn't advise you to call on him. Things are going badly, and he's got a fearful grouch on, they say."

"What's the trouble?"

"The last legs are being knocked out from under Mumble-the-Peg, and he's furious. One of our stocks, you know. Excuse me a few minutes—I'll be with you as soon as I can."

A feeling of remembrance passed over Alfred at the mention of Mumble-the-Peg, and he recalled how he had first heard the name spoken by his Uncle Dick in connection with Mr. Fearing on that Sunday when the Fearings had appeared at Downham Church. The thought served to remind him of all his train of connection with Phyllis Fearing, and a little uneasily he hastened to push the connection from his mind.

It was easy to do so in the surroundings of the office. They never talked business much at Downham, though both his father and Dicky Dane in a general way kept track of things, and there was a vague background of it in

many of their remarks. But all through his boyhood, he had happened to come into the office at intervals on one errand or another, and he had always thought of its atmosphere as an interesting one. To-day, however, in his mood of high spirits and eager expectation, he found it one of considerable excitement. The door of his uncle's private office was closed and from what Roger had said he judged that the moment would be an unpropitious one for a call—so he cocked his chair back on its legs, and with a slight smile of interest on his lips, proceeded to look round him at the scene in front.

Dane and Company was one of the great Boston houses—pretty nearly of the very greatest in national influence. Not that its over-the-counter business amounted to much, although it was one of the few Boston houses boldly announcing to the world that in a semi-philanthropic way it would deal with the small investor. Its chief brokerage asset was a large clientele of the very highest class—private investors—and a good sprinkling of institutions to keep up an active circulation. These, with

its share of the finger in the pie of most great national enterprises with some of the greater New York houses which its long standing had given it, made it a very mighty house indeed.

It so happened, however, that some of the younger partners that the Danes had taken in were hard-driving fellows that rather liked to work for work's sake, and haughty therefore as was the position of the firm, the office had an air of snap and aliveness about it that one would hardly have expected to find.

That was what interested Alfred Dane. Everything seemed so full of jump. The tickers intermittently clicking, the chatting groups around them, the subdued sound of conversation and laughter from the board-room to one side, here a customer detaching himself from a group to take a turn of a few steps, hands in pockets, a pleased smile on his face, evidently meditating prospective profits; here somebody perched on his desk, smoking a cigarette, snatching a moment before the next move; assistants hurrying to and fro; the men calmly but importantly at work in the cage at one end of the large room, telephones ringing,

stenographers receiving dictation, boys running in with the latest bulletins of the Boston News Bureau, the "Tickergraph" cheerfully typing out its bulletins of news from New York, London, Washington—all these things at the moment greatly appealed to him. A certain allurement in it, a continuousness of excitement, came over him, and his imagination began to work on it all. He wondered what the lives of men who were in this excitement every day were like. He contrasted them with his own life. They were so utterly different in their setting. His own life was destined to be passed with books, in the country; quiet, elegant, scholarly, beautiful scenes were to be about him. Of course, that was better—more what he wanted. But—well, at the moment there seemed something fascinating about the life of business. It was so much a part of the world; it seemed so stimulating, so promising! Of course he did not need to go into it—he had never dreamed that he should do anything but lead a life of scholarly leisure. But it came over him with a sense of satisfaction that his people had been

eminently successful in such life, and that very likely he could be in his turn, if he so desired. It thrilled him to think so just for a second—the thought seemed to chord in with the exciting, fresh, accomplishing, triumphant existence he had found himself entering, the last few months.

He got up after two or three minutes and walked over to a pair of tickers. He had an uncertain idea that one gave the New York, and one the Boston, stocks, but he did not know which was which, and he felt a timidity about asking. There happened to be nobody just then beside one of them, and picking up the tape, he began to watch it click out its quotations—a trifle awed before the thought of the mysterious forces it represented. One of the clerks once when he had come in as a boy had taught him to read the symbols, but he had forgotten the abbreviations, and for a moment it was only a dull wonder.

Then somebody standing at another ticker a few yards away, he heard cry out, "Five hundred at ninety-eight cents—Hell! they got Mumble-the-Peg under the dollar that time!"

A spirited chorus at the further ticker echoed the tones of the man's voice, and Alfred felt that somehow it was an eventful moment. At the same time that the man had spoken, he had seen the signs—500 MOP 98 cents—appear on his tape, and he had judged therefore that MOP was the abbreviation of the stock of which Calthrop had spoken.

The idea rather fascinated him, and he watched eagerly for the next appearance of the letters. It seemed that Mumble-the-Peg must be very active, for five items or so further on, it again appeared—200 MOP 97 cents 100 96 cents. Then there seemed a perfect deluge of it coming, and the figures went down to 85. Alfred heard other exclamations of excitement from the second ticker.

"I'm ready," said Calthrop's voice behind him.

Alfred felt almost sorry to be called away.

"Does this mean Mumble-the-Peg, Roger?" he asked, holding out the ribbon to Roger.

"Yes—it's gone down hard, hasn't it? It was ten cents above the dollar when I heard them speaking of it a few minutes ago."

"What's the matter with it?" said Alfred.

"Nothing whatever in it but an assessment, they say. It's one of the few failures the house has ever made, and that's why your uncle's so sore at some of the people who have been showing up how little it's worth. That's what I've been told, that is—I don't know anything about it."

It seemed very exciting to Alfred as he left the office—or would have, if the thought of the news he had to tell his friend had not rushed back into his mind and taken precedence. However, even as it was, the phrase "Mumble-the-Peg" kept coming back to him through the day.

"I wonder if you have any idea of my news," he remarked, when they were seated across the table from one another at Young's.

He smiled with a kind of triumphant expectation, as we all are apt to smile when we have come to tell our best friend of some great success, and to taste of the sweetness of his congratulations. Calthrop had by this time braced himself to go through with the task be-

fore him, and looked back at his friend with a kind of ironical amusement.

"I'm sure I haven't the least idea," he said.

Then a laugh broke from Alfred's lips.

"I don't know whether you've suspected it, but the fact is, Clare and I are engaged, old fellow. You're the first one out of the family to be told, and I want you to be my best man in October."

It had come over Calthrop that there was a decidedly funny side to the whole situation. He had a dull envy, almost hatred, of his friend in his heart, yet there he was, obviously appointed by fate to serve as his friend's confidant. His lips curled, but he laughed nervously, as he reached his hand across the table.

"Congratulations, and all that sort of thing, to you," he said, nodding to Alfred. "Really, I didn't know you were hit there."

His laughter helped to carry him through it, and as far as Dane knew, his clasp was cordial. But a deep burning resentment was in his heart.

"It was somewhat sudden, to be sure," re-

marked Alfred sagely. "That is—things coming to a head."

"Yes," said Roger dryly, "that's the way those things are apt to happen, I'm told."

He kept his eyes on Alfred, being willing to comment so far on the other's remarks, but not disposed to offer any conversation of his own.

"I think I'm awfully lucky," said Dane. "Clare's one of the cleverest girls in the world."

Roger's lips faintly hardened.

"Miss Manton's very clever, surely," said he.

"You'll be my best man, of course," asked the other, leaning forward a little. "I think Clare likes you, old fellow, a good deal. You wouldn't believe it, but I'm congratulating myself that you got out just when you did—I don't know that I'd have had a chance, if you'd been around."

Calthrop smilingly shook his head at his friend, as if in rebuke at his flattery. He had it on his tongue's end to say that Alfred need not have worried, having what he had to of-

fer! But he managed to refrain from the cynicism.

Alfred's looking up to him, however, he at that moment recognized as part of an old relation that had been between them ever since a day, several years before, when he had caught a young, very boyish-looking lad staring over at him admiringly after he had made a brilliant translation in the Horace class. That had been the beginning of their friendship, and all through, he saw now, Alfred had always ungrudgingly looked up to him and admired him.

"I'm afraid I shan't be able to do what you want me to, Alfred," he said quietly, touched by the thought. "I don't know whether you've heard of my new job, but it looks now as if about that time I should be in London."

He proceeded to tell Alfred of the commission on which the house was sending him, rather concealing the date of his sailing, however, and intimating that by the first of October he should be in London.

"Well, well," said Alfred, "that's pretty

nice, isn't it? I knew you'd make good, old fellow, and this is surely a great promotion. But you needn't pull out quite so soon, need you?—I'm sure I can fix it up with Uncle Bill."

Calthrop, behind his mask, cringed. His departure for England had come to him as the one blessing in a dark time, and he caught now the possibility of his losing the greatest advantage he had hoped for from it—the getting out of the way before the time of the marriage.

"Don't say anything about it yet, please," he said a little sharply. "We'll hope that things will come out all right, but I happen to know that time is quite an element in the matter, and it might stand in my way very much if there were any obstacle to prevent my going at just the right moment. You know, hard as it is, one has to think of those things."

Alfred's face fell.

"It won't be just the same if you're not there, Roger," he said.

"Thanks," said Calthrop, rather grimly.

"It's nice of you to want me. Whether I can or not, however, of course you'll fix things up all right."

He was glad the conversation had drifted away from Clare. He was nervously fearful lest he should have to discuss this girl that his friend was going to have to wife, and gently compliment her, and dwell upon his friend's luck. And indeed the necessity for so doing came on again very soon, and Roger—firmly, hiding his resentment and his tremulousness of heart—had to carry out what portion he could of that congratulatory rôle we are expected to play when our friends come to us and tell us that the most attractive girl in the world is also the most lovable. It was fortunate that Alfred Dane was so carried on by the excited exaltation of his state of mind that he did not observe a certain grudgingness in Calthrop's comments.

He was armor-proof at any rate against the more or less sarcastic tone that Roger could not keep quite out of his voice, and the interview came to an end without his discovering that his friend was not doing his full duty as

a friend. He had a dim, unphrased feeling, to be sure, that the interview had not been quite so delightful as he had expected it to be, but nevertheless he went down to Downham on one of the mid-afternoon trains, as surely walking on air—mentally—as he usually was in those days.

Life was full of wine every day now for Alfred. Everything seemed made for his benefit, and in the future about to come into his power. There was nothing, he felt, that he could not do or be. All the world was gathered into his arms. It was a very harmless and not deep sort of egotism, to be sure—just the sort that Nature means us all to feel at the glorious mating season of life; one to make us a little thoughtless perhaps of others, and so, cruel; but one on the other hand to warm our hearts into happiness that is at least superficially generous.

Alfred thought that afternoon how lovely the country looked as he rode down over the wide Lynn marshes with their stretches of sea beyond, and then on to the soft, rolling hills the other side of Beverly. And when he got

out of Downham, and was driving up from the station, it was the same beauty, only made nearer and more magical. The fresh breezes from the sea came to him, the rich August haze was over everything, and the country seemed too fair, too inwrought with poetry and suggestion to be true. It was his country too. All his being, and the being of his ancestors, was worked into it, and oh! how he loved it—what delight there seemed to be in the thought of long years ahead in it, with his wife beside him whom he was just about to see. The very thought of Clare in those days intoxicated him. She was so vital, so instinct with joy! When he was with her, or about to see her, he could think of nothing else. She had taken possession of all his senses and almost all his thoughts!

This afternoon there was added, in the same key, the thought of the great outside world—exciting, demanding, mystifying; the vague idea came to him again that some day it would be pleasant—just for a little—to have his part in it. How well Roger was apparently doing in it! Dear old Roger—it would be a shame

if he couldn't be at the wedding—really, it would be a considerable blot on his pleasure. Perhaps matters could be arranged. He would not say anything about it at any rate for the present to Clare. She too would be disappointed, he felt, if he could not have him as his best man.

Thinking all such thoughts—all happily keyed together, so that even the possibility of the lesser disappointment added to the sweetness of the whole time, he bowled along beside the groom to Downham Hundreds.

Roger Calthrop's emotions meanwhile, as may well be supposed, were playing a tune of quite different character. Alfred's visit left him sullen; and for that day and the rest of the week, he went about his work, close-mouthed, irritable, going over and over the tangle into which he had fallen.

Not that there were not some moments of exquisite joy. Carried away at times he would forget all else except the fact that Clare had told him she loved him—that in heart she was his, and then with a sense of exaltation he would go over the momentous events that had

thrown them together, and dwell upon every scene and event—her words, her looks, the kisses he had taken from her, all the swift, sudden, blissful current that had brought them so inevitably together. He would dwell on such things for a moment, till suddenly a tremor would take him, and he would push the thoughts angrily and dully away from him, and all his being would be aroused into a bitter mockery of himself and a dull hatred for Alfred Dane. For Alfred Dane, he would bethink himself, was in another few weeks to become Clare's husband. And vividly then and with a torturing horror would his love react upon him.

That he loved her, he now knew. Bitterly had the fact taken possession of his soul, but he had no longer the slightest doubt that she was the one girl he wanted.

He laughed at himself mockingly at times, jeering at himself that he, who had supposed he was safe against any such catastrophe, had been the very one to fall into what he had always called a weakness. But his laughter died away usually almost instantly and made him

grit his teeth, or clutch something fiercely at the thoughts it left.

The final revelation of himself had come to him, he saw, on this last meeting. Before he had been unconsciously in love with her—since that day when he knew she loved him in return, he had been unreservedly and knowingly so.

Her confession had quite plowed up his soul. Roger's youth had not conduced to developing his affections, though it had left him on the whole a rather clean, manly fellow. But now he felt, mingled with his despair and his jealousy, the transfiguring effects of love. He became understanding, forgiving, protective toward Clare. At moments, he almost forgot himself in thought for her. His heart yearned over her. He foresaw the hardness and bitterness that would come to her with the years, when she had made her sacrifice; he saw the training of her youth that made her now so keen and sure in her seeking for wealth. He took part in the struggle which he imagined was going on in her heart: he saw a better side—tender, true—in her. At moments,

he saw only *that,* and all contradicting it, her overturning of his own life, he looked quite beyond. In countless ways, thoughts of chivalric protectiveness toward her came to him, and he would dwell on them for many moments. And then suddenly, they would be all driven away by a mad cry of primitive passion, of wounded and barred longing, of rebellion against fate.

Roger Calthrop remained in this state for over a week, and then was pulled out of it by a happening that in a psychological sense was perhaps strange.

One morning in the week succeeding Alfred Dane's appearance at the office, he woke up in his room at Winthrop very early. He had taken a long walk the evening before, before coming down from the city, out along the boulevard by the Charles, and then after reaching Winthrop had lingered by the ocean for another couple of hours. Another person, knowing his program after his day's work was over, might have thought him rather a lonely and pathetic figure. But as far as that went, he was not lonely, having plenty of company in

his thoughts. And in those thoughts he had been dwelling the evening before, going over and over the whole tangle and coming once more at the end to the same conclusion to which he had always come—that love him as Clare might, she wanted something else more than her love; and that love her as he might, he was now prevented from trying to win her by Alfred Dane's love for her.

Then in the early morning he awoke. The sun was rising, but the light in his room was still gray. His mind was still engrossed in the one subject, he found, but for some reason it was singularly clear, and a thought, fixed and incontrovertible, was in the forefront of it—a view of the matter quite opposed to the conclusion which the evening before and always earlier he had reached. A cloud seemed as it were to have scattered before him, and a great sense of relief was over him. He turned the matter over, but the view of it with which he had awakened seemed fixed and unescapable. He could not get away from it.

"I have a right to my chance," was the thought that came steadily before him. "That

is the only way to right and truth. It is not friendship on my part to let her marry him, if she does not love him. At any rate, it is not friendship to let her marry him without trying my best to win her. Love is the only way to truth. Greater evils than losing her now, may come to him if she marries him simply for money. She is not the sort of girl that will be content without passionate love. It is my duty to take my chance—a duty higher than friendship, and one that in the end will not be inconsistent with it."

And with this resolve firmly fixed in his mind, Roger fell asleep again, calm and happy in the clear, fresh, cool air of the morning.

He would try to win Clare to be his wife, not Alfred's!

CHAPTER X

A RAINY SUNDAY

"YOU won't be happy without me, Clare."

Clare's clear gray eyes narrowed and her lips hardened.

"Possibly not," she replied. "But then on the other hand, if I were to marry you, I should always feel that I had ruined my life."

"You mean, because you want money?"

She nodded coolly.

"It sounds rather horrid when you say it right out, doesn't it? Still, I don't suppose you can imagine what money means to a woman."

Roger laughed understandingly and confidently.

"Can't I? Remember I've always been a poor man with rich friends."

"I know. But then after all you're a man, and it doesn't matter to you as it does to a woman."

Now that at last he was alone with her,

Roger felt his own love so sweeping and irresistible that he had not a doubt that it would conquer Clare too. Already he had got a glimpse of her hardness; but as yet it seemed only amusing, perhaps a trifle pathetic to him. It was still early in the game, and so he only laughed and sought Clare's eyes with his.

It was a moment that at times in the two or three weeks before he had almost believed would never come. Acting on his perception that had come out so clearly to him as the result of his early morning awakening, he had come down to Downham for the last four Sundays, bent on "having his chance" with Clare. But, poor fellow, if having "a chance" meant a talk with her, it had very often seemed to him that in spite of his resolve he was not going to get it.

As he put it to himself, "the very devil seemed in her." She was well enough aware of the meaning of his coming, he was conscious, but as far as giving him any opportunity to talk with her went, she seemed mischievously and maliciously clever in avoiding it.

"Never mind," he had thought, when the first week-end was over, and he had gone back to Boston, rather anxious over not having had any possible opportunity to argue his case, and yet still able to be amused by her perversity. "It shows she's thinking of me, and she can't always manage to hold me off. Luck will be on my side next time."

But when two other Saturdays and Sundays had gone by without giving him any better chance to see her alone, he lost his composure and grew thoroughly nervous and irritated. All the sense of revulsion which he had previously been experiencing, when various things drove it home to him that he had come to try to win his host's and his friend's promised bride away from him, vanished, and a sullen blackness and fierceness settled over him that he could hardly conceal from others. In fact at times he lost all care whether the Danes perceived it or not; and it was only some guardian angel and the family's absorption in the excitement of the coming wedding that kept poor Roger's secret from being quite visibly revealed to the world.

At moments she seemed wantonly cruel to him. Her marriage had been set for the early days of October, and Clare with considerable glee advanced and took her place in the household as the exciting, pivotal figure of that great event. Now as bride-to-be she had power at least to lessen the suggestions for Calthrop of the cruel dividing power of what was about to happen. But instead of so doing, it seemed to him that she took delight in emphasizing them.

"I do wish, Mr. Calthrop, you were going to be here," she would say, looking over at him with curiously innocent eyes when there was somebody else about. "Weddings are such fun always. Don't you think you can manage it?"

Calthrop at first let fly back to these barbed words his equally barbed answer, "Are the bridesmaids going to be very pretty, Miss Manton?" or some other such thing intended to display a good-natured indifference. But as he grew more irritated, he tried to ignore the sharp pricks in his skin, and if he could do so, made no reply to her.

He had been very decided in his stand that he would not be Alfred's best man. He was afraid all the time that William Dane of the office would intervene and thrust an unwished-for permission on him, but so far the matter had not been referred to that great authority, and his statement that his going to London did not permit his officiating had been taken at its face value. If Bill Dane should be invoked, Calthrop did not know what excuse he should offer, but some loophole he was determined that he would find. He did not mean the wedding to come off at all; but if come off it did, he surely would not be present at it. Already he had engaged his passage on a boat sailing from New York on the day before the event.

And now it was the fourth week-end on which he had come down to Downham, and at last chance had given him what he wanted. Through Saturday afternoon and evening and on Sunday morning he had tried in vain for his talk with Clare, and by the afternoon was at that desperate point where he felt he must openly walk up to her and ask her to

hear him. Go back to Boston again he would not without having "had his chance."

To get control of himself he had put on his waterproof coat—the afternoon was rainy—and gone out for a turn down the road. As he was returning, he saw Clare advancing toward him, prepared likewise for walking.

His heart felt a sudden sweet confusion of all its currents, but it seemed perfectly natural to him nevertheless that now at last she should be there.

"Well, I'm glad enough to see you," he cried, stopping short in front of her, and forgetting all subterfuge in his relief of mind.

"I like the heartiness of your compliments," said she, laughing. "However, I don't think I want your company—I've come out for a solitary walk."

Roger only laughed, and wheeled round beside her as she started to go on.

"You know well enough that I've been thinking of nothing but getting a chance to speak with you for the whole last month, Clare."

"How delicious!" she said gayly. "One

would think that I wasn't going to be married in two weeks and that you were some lover of mine."

The allusion made him quiver a little, and yet was in some sense consolatory. Could it be that she would wound him so, unless she were prepared to soothe his bruises?

However, he hardly cared for anything now. He was with her; they were alone, and he was about to have his chance to make his plea. She made no further objection to his joining her, and side by side they strode along the road.

The rain was very light and gentle, but the whole sky was overcast, and nowhere was there a gleam of light. Clare, who had her father's artist's senses, looked forth on the scene and found it strangely akin to her mood. She was very much alive, and, on the whole, gloriously happy, yet underneath was an undercurrent of sadness, and she recognized that the landscape was prepared to sympathize with either feeling.

The air was clear enough so that the hills at a distance were not obscured, but only made

softly hazy by the rain, and every touch within their arc was one of intense harmony, color-subdued but rich. Wet and shiny, between the greenish-blue washed grass, the road splashed away ahead of them, low-lying, leading southward, and bringing them soon in sight of the light yellow stacks of marsh hay. Some of the corn was still standing; more was cut and stooked. Golden-rod and wild asters rose everywhere by the roadside, and the woodbine as it climbed up the trees was just turning. Piles of yellow pumpkins were gathering in the corn fields; apples were plumply falling here and there from the trees, and a small flock of ducks went flying south. The cut fields, dipping and swelling like a woman's just ripening breasts, allured the eye. Everything had that indescribably soft and mellow air of early autumn when the landscape is inwrought with feeling—with both hope and promise and with melancholy and a deep sense of transitoriness. Never can one be happier, and never, alas! can he be sadder, than on such a day as Clare and Roger had about them then!

But Clare on the surface was gloriously happy. She laughed unconsciously, threw back her shoulders, and let the soft warm rain fall on her face with a sense of joy. The last Sundays, and not the least this one, had been of the most intense delight to her.

"Isn't it unbelievable that everything has come out just as I wanted it?" she said, looking confidentially at Roger. "I can hardly realize that in three weeks' time I shall be Mrs. Alfred Dane."

Calthrop grinned admiringly at her.

"You're either about as heartless or about as self-centered as they make 'em," he said.

Clare laughed again nonchalantly.

"What do you mean? I fear I've got rather out of touch with your mind this last month or so. I've been so busy I haven't had time to pay much attention to you."

"So I've perceived. I admit you play a fine sporting game."

"Sporting game, Mr. Calthrop?"

"Oh, I don't mind confessing that you've given me some twitches at the heart, if you want trophies of your prowess. I don't mind

anything, now I've got you with me, Clare."

The laughter was like a veil before her eyes as she turned them on him—a very cooling and tantalizing veil.

"You're very familiar, aren't you?" she said, looking at him appraisingly. "Did you really mind?"

"I think you're the very devil at torturing a man," he replied.

"Very much?" asked she, laughing again.

She had not seemed to mind his strong word, but he found himself sorry now that he had used it. All the love that had grown up in him for her sprang up in him at it as if wounded.

"Haven't you a bit of heart, Clare?" he said softly.

Her features changed a trifle, but some wicked impulse made her again drive away the feeling from her eyes.

"It's been great fun finding out if you have," she said coolly.

They had slowed down their walk, and he stepped toward her now, the gesture of his hands seeming as if he could not endure his

distance away. But the sound of some noise in front checked him, and looking up, he and Clare saw that a dozen cows had just turned out of a side road into the main one. Behind came a couple of men in a rusty trap, crouching under great coats. Roger stepped away.

"What's the matter?" said Clare laughingly.

His coolness came back to him.

"Cattle were a good omen to me once with you," he said, looking at her grimly. "Perhaps they will be again."

They stepped into the wet grass as the procession went by. The men in the trap stared at them, wondering why people who evidently did not have to should be out on such an afternoon.

She had apparently understood the meaning of his movement and had not rebuked it; and when the carriage had passed out of sight, Roger again started toward her, reaching for her hands.

"No," said she, putting them behind her. "There must be nothing of that sort, you know."

"I don't know at all," said he. "I only know I love you, Clare."

He was close to her by then, and probably was about to put his arms about her. But a flash came into Clare's eyes and she spoke sharply and coolly.

"I mean what I say, Mr. Calthrop."

It hurt him that she had ignored his words of love, and had thought only of herself. He stepped back, stopped by the tone. Perhaps a look appeared in his eyes, for Clare spoke again at once, and a little more softly.

"You know, after all, I am engaged to Alfred Dane."

"That's what I'm talking about. I want you to throw him over and marry me," he said.

It was what he had planned so long to say, and now he was saying it! And the way Clare answered it was by emphatically shaking her head. Then Calthrop fell back on the appeal "ad feminam" with which the chapter opens, "You won't be happy without me, Clare." And Clare had replied by admitting the fact,

but saying that nevertheless she would be still more unhappy without money.

He had of course planned to meet her worldly objections, as a thousand times he had gone over the matter in his mind. And now the time had come.

"You know I'm not asking you to marry a man wholly without prospects," he remarked, with repressed confidence.

"Aren't you?" said she. "Don't think me too queer, but I fancy I could make a pretty good guess at your income."

"Well?"

"It's just such a one, I imagine, as has stood behind my youthful years. Of course mother and Meg had part of it, and there was a good deal of schooling, but I pretty well know its possibilities. A couple of frocks a year, and a month's agony of conscience afterwards if you buy your hat at a good shop. Isn't that about what it means?"

Roger was surveying her with some amusement. In spite of all his knowledge of the world, it seemed, with all his love warm within

him, "queer" that she was making these calculations.

"You make it rather hard for me to urge the claims of my love in competition with those of an enlarged wardrobe," he said dryly —and yet loving her so with all his eyes and heart that the sarcasm was only a little ripple on the stream of his feeling.

She threw a quick, sharp look at him.

"I know you know what I mean better than that," she said. "I'm rather fond of clothes, as far as that goes, but not inordinately. That is only one instance, of course, of something bigger that three thousand or so a year means—semi-occasional flurries at extravagance, and scrimping between times; a constant longing after things you ought to have and can't have—in fact, a steady harrying and vulgarizing and spoiling of your days by the presence of that one staring fact of existence—that money can do most things that you want to do, and that you haven't got it."

"But I'm not always going to be poor," he said energetically, dropping his composure as he saw how well thought-out her attitude was,

and on the whole glad that the moment had now come when at last the enemy had declared itself.

She looked at him questioningly.

"I'm not always going to be poor, Clare," he repeated, looking at her, his heart swelling at the thought of what he could do if she would only aid him. "It isn't as if I were asking you to share three thousand a year very long. Why, you don't know what is in me, my dear girl. In five years, my income, I feel sure, will have doubled. In ten, I know I can be a partner in Dane's or some other house, and all that you wish, all that money can do, shall be yours. Even alone, my chance is good; I haven't the slightest doubt I can do it. But with you beside me, Clare—"

Clare laughed, but slowly, firmly shook her head. She had given full consideration to what he was saying. She believed his words more than she admitted, was moved by him—moved by a side of him which she had only guessed at before, but which, now revealed, answered perfectly to her own nature.

Clare was one to glory and rejoice in achievement—in the artistic working out of that right to the good things of the world which she believed was to be in the clever, handsome fellow pleading so before her. His attraction, his love, called to her; her own love pleaded so alluringly, with such sweet promises of delight, with her at that moment. For three months now she had done nothing but dream of him. She had thought she was playing with him, and seeing what he would do and say, as she moved him now this way, now that. But now, poor girl, she saw that she had been playing as well with her own heart, and making it ready to be so sadly sore at the end. She dared not look at him at this minute—she knew too well the pleading of sex and personality and love that would be in him, ready to join her own rebellious forces, and drag her from her sure rock—that rock that the tired drowning man when the sweet, cruel sea is sucking and drawing and trying to drag him down, and promising him rest and peace, clings to desperately, with a far-away but stubborn knowledge that in holding fast there

are after all salvation and life. For Clare stubbornly knew that in spite of Roger's pleading, and the throbbing, responsive pleading of her own heart, there were things in this world which she valued more than what he had to give, and to which she must at this moment of all times cling with all the tenacity of all her glorious, strong selfishness, if she would have any salvation or life. And so, looking now at him, but beyond him, she slowly, decidedly shook her head, and her lips, though she still slightly laughed, were very firm.

"No," she said firmly. "I'm sorry, but it cannot be, Mr. Calthrop."

"Do you doubt me?" cried Roger with the ring of power in his voice. "I know it may seem boastful for me to say these things, but I am ready to pledge myself—"

She interrupted him calmly.

"It doesn't seem boastful to me in the slightest. I feel almost certain that you will do all you say. And sometimes—at moments—I know I should like to help you do it. Only what I say and do now mustn't be de-

termined by what I should like at moments, you know—I must look ahead and see what I want most of all things in the world. And I do see that very plainly now. What I am going to do is the outcome of my whole life. I've been very wrong and very foolish of course, both for you and for myself, to do what I've been doing—trying to make you care for me. I'm perfectly willing to admit that. But—well, I couldn't help it. Circumstances threw us together, and you attracted me from the beginning. But nevertheless that's only an episode—it can't, it shan't compare in strength with what I've been counting on all my days—in short with what has become, Mr. Calthrop, Me, my soul, my very life!"

"But that is, after all, only money," cried Roger instantly and eagerly. "And I will make that, Clare, I tell you—I will make money, as much money as you can wish."

Clare smiled ironically.

"I see I haven't succeeded in making it plain to you," she said patiently. "That's just the point I mean, after all—it isn't only money. It isn't money, in fact, at all. It's

what money brings that all my life has made me set my heart on having. It's freedom from knowing there's such a thing as money at all, to be able to despise it, and yet be, oh, so sure of it. It's freedom from what lack of money forces on you—littleness and worry and wrinkles—things you can't understand, perhaps, that women suffer. It's more than anything that has to do with money. It's the feeling that all my thoughts and dreams and years haven't gone for nothing—that I have progressed and made something out of myself by them, that life has been worth while, and is something that one's pride and cleverness can delight in, and go on to other pleasures with. Can't you see?—if I should marry you, I shouldn't have these things. I should still be doing what I've always done—planning with you, scheming, worrying how we might get on—and a pretty deep sense of disappointment would make me at odds with everything. I should hate you, and I couldn't help showing it, and you would hate me, and everything would be frightful, and both our lives would be spoiled."

"They would be if there weren't any love in it," he said quietly. He had grown rather pale, and the confidence now as he spoke had somewhat gone out of his tone.

Clare swallowed something in her throat.

"Oh, I love you," she said, "but it isn't that sort of love that makes up for other things. For me, there isn't any such sort of love possible, I'm very sure. You can't understand, I know, but it's so. There isn't with some girls."

Roger was deadly pale now. Her certainty and unswervingness cut through him, and drove away all his arguments. A sense of terrible weakness and of being at the mercy of something pitilessly hard and strong came upon him. Suddenly he lost his head.

"Clare! Clare!" he said, stretching out his arms to her. "I cannot do without you. Come to me, dear—is not my love worth all else in the world?"

Clare grew faint and a mist swam before her eyes. All the life ebbed out of her, and she knew not what to say. Her body trembled, and she felt herself swaying and falling

toward him, and his arms moving out to take her, and draw her to himself—the green, resistless, sweet, mighty currents of the ocean swelling and bubbling over her, dragging and plucking at her fingers as they clung to the slippery, jagged stone, and promising her a soft and longed-for death, if she would only once give herself up and let go. The sweetness of his humility, the yearning of his eyes, all his love—never more she knew could she resist these things once the arms had closed about her. Already life seemed dim and faraway to her—the life of pride and conquest and accomplishment she had planned. Already Roger's hands had touched her, and only faint sounds from the shore came now to her ears.

And then—then sharply the spirit of fight came back to her. She made one great effort—perhaps the hungry waves would leave her alone then—she clung with the last strength before death to the rock. Her fingers ached and bled, but she clung nevertheless, clung as we do in the last desperation.

"No, no," she gasped, gathering herself to-

gether, and springing sharply away from him there on the road. "Oh, no—that cannot be."

She was full woman at last, at any rate, and her eyes met Roger's, hunted, pleading, unguarded, responsive. Yet the firmness was fast coming back into them, and a great sob of resolve broke from her throat.

"No—that cannot be, Roger," she said lingeringly. "I wish with all my soul it might be—but it never, never can."

Her eyes were still soft with fire, her bosom rose and fell with panting, but each second her look grew more and more firm. A faint laugh sounded again from her.

"I am weak, you see," she said quietly. "I love you, but I know myself. It would be in vain to plead any more. Oh, please, please spare yourself and me the pain."

The world, with all its images and hopes, fades away sometimes, and the very heart sinks out of us as there slowly comes home to our unbelieving eyes the fact that what has been our whole existence, is surely not any longer to be. Only a weak and hollow shell

of life remains about our sense of blankness and our pain.

"Oh, Clare, can it really be that you are so heartless?" breathed Roger in a whisper as to himself. He had no expectation of any answer to his question, and she gave him none. Only there was a vague trembling behind her eyes; but in those eyes he saw there was no changing.

Then suddenly his mood changed. He had been very soft, and now he swung to the opposite extreme. A feeling of rage that he had bared his soul before what was so hard and unyielding came over him.

"Come, let us go back," he said fiercely. "We've had enough of this agony."

He swung himself sharply around, and started back along the road, and Clare felt a great thrill of joy at the sternness of his words and his look. She had been tenderhearted to him a second before, pitying him, pitying herself, with all her soul. But as she stepped away beside him along the soft, wet road, that feeling suddenly seemed to be gone,

and she was elated by him again as she had been at her first two meetings with him, carried away by his presence. Had he sulked or continued to beseech her, she would have been sorry for him. But now all her own being instead was made triumphant and eager. She was not conscious enough about it to say to herself that he always did the thing that her whole nature craved, but that was what she felt—a splendid, tantalizing fulfillment in him, answering to the intense life in herself she was discovering.

"It's rather hard for me to keep up, Roger," she gasped, pantingly, and rather pathetically after they had gone some couple of hundred yards which she had succeeded in covering beside him only by exerting all her pluck. "If you want, I'll drop behind and let you go on ahead."

Physical motion had already moderated a trifle Calthrop's fierce bitterness. Thank God there is always relief in the feeling of cool air on our cheeks and in the wholesome swing of our arms and legs over the wide, calm earth, and he felt something a little more human

mingling with the hatred which had for a moment swallowed up his love for this girl.

"I suppose you've properly fitted in Alfred to your scheme of things," he said without looking at her, and yet slowing down his stride to a more possible one.

Clare's cheeks were glowing with the swift pace, and her eyes, had he noticed, were lustrous and soft. But a touch of laughter was in her voice as she answered,

"Don't you think I shall make a charming wife to preside over his table?"

Roger's heart seemed to stop. The blood fled from his cheeks. Up to this time he had hardly considered Alfred Dane's part in the matter, and when he had, it had been more in pity than in jealousy. All through the last weeks, in fact, he had unconsciously been counting that Clare would never marry his friend. But now the girl's words, coming after he had definitely lost her, brought suddenly and sharply home to him the truth and the horror of it. To preside over his table! Life went out of him as he realized what that actually meant. Alfred was going to have as his *wife* this girl

who was everything to him! For a moment he could have cried out in what was something like terror.

But at the same instant as the shock came the sense that he must not, he would not show it to Clare. His feet had faltered and unconsciously halted at the blow, but in another second he was walking on as before, his fists clenched hard in his pockets, his teeth set hard together, while slowly his breath returned to him. Roger, knowing little of home or close affection, had had the long training of school and the university—all one's life passed mostly with men—and through every fiber of his being ran the axioms of his training that he must be stoic in taking punishment of every sort. He had let his heart be seen once that day, but all the fierceness of soul that had followed that fact bade him never again give way to any feeling.

"As good as the next one," he said roughly. "Girls are all alike, I fancy."

Then Clare laughed softly.

"No, they're not," she said. "That's where you make a great mistake, Roger. Only a

very few of them would have the courage to choose as I have what they really wanted in preference to a man that makes love as delightfully as you do. I'm very serious when I say that I'm almost without heart. Please believe me for your own good. As for Alfred, I shall be a fairly good wife to him. He'll have an awakening of course—even he will be capable of perceiving after a while that I'm not wholly in love with him. But then when we're fifty, he'll be proud of me."

She looked up saucily at him, but Calthrop was striding on with eyes glaring at the ground. Their pace was still fast, and it was not long before they came in sight of Morty Dane's house.

"Perhaps you'll be kind enough to mention later that I had to go back to town by the five-forty," said Calthrop, pausing as they came up the drive. "I'm going to go in by the side door, if you don't mind."

Clare's breath came a little quicker.

"I shall see you again—before you sail?" she said in a low voice.

Her eyes were turned toward him, but he did not look at her.

"No,—probably not," he said. "Good-by, and good wishes to you."

She hesitated, and then put out her hand, but he seemed not to see it.

"I shall have to hurry to get my things into my bag," he said roughly. "Make my adieux, please. As I say, I'm going in by the side door."

She stood sorrowfully before him, all her heart suddenly faint and weak. He did not look at her, however, nor speak again, but strode away round the corner of the house.

CHAPTER XI

MORTY DANE EXPOUNDS SCHOPENHAUER

ALL the prettiness and promise of a wedding seem to masculine fancy, according as its possessor is romantic or cynical, either fun or foolishness. But to a woman, they are always the mark of a stern and responsible competency at work somewhere behind them.

Some part at least of the competency behind the wedding that was to take place in Downham Church on the first Wednesday in October belonged to Lou Manton.

It was now four months since Mrs. Manton had first driven up the hill in the station hack to Morty Dane's, and events during that time had progressed with a propitiousness that was almost frightening. Fortunately enough, however, during those last weeks in September, Lou had enough practical tasks on hand

to keep her from dwelling too entirely on the deeper meaning of the days.

The marriage project had seemed to go like a train on fire. No sooner had Alfred announced his engagement than all—Morty, Dick, Sarah Dane, of course the young man most concerned—had voted for an early wedding, and the happy event had been set for the first week in October. And now Mrs. Manton's head had at least one small corner of it filled with those details usually handed over to the bride's mother.

There was a mixture of contentment and question in her mind as she went about those —to a woman—delightfully demanding tasks which such an occasion brings—trousseau, fittings, consultations, invitation lists, and all the fuss and furbelows of a large wedding. She had not wholly missed the Roger Calthrop affair, and had been anxious, perhaps still was anxious at the thought of what might happen there. She knew Clare pretty well, and was aware more or less of what was going on in the girl's mind. But things seemed to be coming now into a wholly smooth channel, and she

could not help giving a breath of relief at moments at the security the outlook was taking on.

Then there was no small happiness to her in the family aspect that the affair was taking on. For fifteen years now she had lived her own life and fought her own battles, and there had been many moments in that time when, womanlike and humanlike, she had found a loneliness in the process. Now that all seemed past to her and she had the soothing sense of having certain backing all about. Not only were her cousins considerately kind in the somewhat delicate task of properly launching Clare—Sarah Dane, who was a rich woman herself and had developed a strong liking for the Mantons, insisted in being most generous —but also Lou was touched to perceive how completely she and her brood were taken to be of the family.

In her years of separation she had grown almost to forget that she was a Dane, and to feel alienated from, almost hateful toward the family. In approaching them again, it had been almost as a general invading hostile ter-

ritory. But now it seemed that there was no similar feeling on the part of the home-staying Danes. A prodigal perhaps she had been, but from all their attitude they took it quite for granted, and with simple and quite unconscious kindliness of relationship, that she should bring her offspring home to them to be wed.

For one thing, Clare was to be married from Downham Hundreds. The service of course was to be at church, but from the great house on the hill Clare was to go to that service, there she was to be got ready for her bridal, and lastly thither, as it were, Alfred, the heir of the house, was to come to seek her. So it had been decided at a grand council of the heads of the clan, where Lou had in vain protested that she was ashamed to drive Alfred out of his own home. But the other counselors had been too much for her. Of course the wedding must be at Downham—all the Dane weddings were—and as she could hardly take her family to Dicky's, and as the two other big houses, Mrs. Epsom's and Bill Dane's, were for various reasons not to be opened till

Christmas, it was gently but firmly impressed on Lou that she—the Mantons—were to stay at Downham Hundreds, while Alfred Dane some few days before the great event was to be expelled from his home and to take up his residence with his uncle at the parsonage.

So Lou had a basis of deep satisfaction as the day drew on. She had done all she had set out to do—perhaps more—and now she had certain finishing touches to give that were agreeable occupation to her mind. And the consciousness of that competency, already referred to, accompanied and soothed her always.

And yet her heart was full of questionings—questionings sometimes anxious, the nature of which she occasionally hinted at, as in the conversation that occurred between her and Sarah Dane some week or more before the day set for the wedding.

"Dear Aunt Sarah," said Lou Manton, when the two women had drifted one morning after breakfast into Miss Dane's private sitting-room, "do you think I'm too old to need a chaperon?"

"What put that idea into your head, child?" said the older woman, adjusting her pince-nez and looking at Lou keenly. "You're pretty enough, if that's what you want me to say."

"Aren't you nice!" exclaimed Lou, reaching over and patting her hand. "I really believe you've liked to have me here."

"What have you got on your mind, Louise?" said Miss Dane, suspiciously.

"Tell me, do you think I've acted very frivolously this summer?"

"I'm trying very hard, my dear, to make out what you are driving at."

Lou's eyes sparkled a bit.

"Men are such funny creatures, aren't they —particularly when they get to fifty?"

"I suppose you mean you've been leading Morty on, Louise?"

"Poor old silly that he is! I shouldn't be at all surprised if I could marry him. What would you say if I did?"

She looked up appraisingly at the other. Sarah Dane's eyes lingered sharply on her face for a second in return.

"Do you think you will?" she asked, with

a little craving in her voice for confidences.

Lou burst out laughing.

"Not unless I'm hard put to it, dear," she answered quickly. "Still he might be worse. He'd be perfectly simple to manage."

"I thought possibly—" began the other slowly, watching the face before her and measuring her words.

"What?" said Lou, a faint tinge of red appearing on her face, as she held it defiantly to the light for the other's inspection. She had a prevision of what Sarah Dane meant.

"That there might be some one else, dear," concluded the latter.

Lou shrugged her shoulders, and in spite of a little paleness on her face, laughed carelessly.

"There might be, if he had lots and lots of money," she answered.

Things all seemed so uncertain to her that she was not going—even to Sarah Dane, in whom she had come to trust implicitly—to treat them any way but defiantly.

The older woman threw another sharp look at her.

"Don't be too sure," she said. "It's not too late for something better than that for you."

"Who knows!" replied Lou, less aloofly. "As far as that goes, aren't women funny creatures?"

Her look for a moment seemed to be far away and softened. Then she recollected herself and burst out laughing once more.

"But we are getting away from the point, Aunt Sarah. You're an awfully nice chaperon, and I've enjoyed the summer and everything immensely, but—well, don't you think things are getting to seem a trifle unconventional?"

"Do you mean Mortimer has been persecuting you?"

"What an expression! Poor old Morty! 'Persecuting' me! Do you know, I've half a mind to make him propose to me."

Lou's eyes began to look as if wicked ideas were sprouting fast behind them.

"I wonder if I'm too old," she said, with a sort of meditative air which sometimes made

her seem like a naughty child, "to have a bit of the devil in me."

"Louise!" said Aunt Sarah, beginning to draw down her lips. Before the process was quite completed, however, her niece had sprung forward, thrown her arms about her waist, and kissed her.

"I love so to shock you," she said. "You know you don't approve, and yet you like it immensely."

"You are very young after all, dear," replied Sarah Dane, patting her on the cheek gently. "I hope you may be happy yet."

Lou grew sober again and after a second something like a sigh came from her lips. Then she pulled herself together once more with a laugh.

"I think I shall try it, you know," she said, nodding to the other. "He's been getting rather skittish lately, I can see, and before I go, I'm going to see if I can't stir him up a little from the sort of mummy existence he leads. What I wanted to say, however, was that I shall leave you a day or two after the

wedding. Let's call it Friday. You know I won't try to say how fearfully nice you've been to me."

"Do you think you must do it?" asked Miss Dane.

She was truly sorry, and Lou knew that she was sorry, and that was one thing that made the latter regret the passing of the days. She got up now and went over and kissed Miss Dane on the cheek, and repeated regretfully her words that she must draw her visit to an end.

Dear Miss Sarah!—the months since the Mantons had invaded the great house which she superintended for her nephew had been for her increasingly pleasant ones—more pleasant than she had realized till now when she saw, recognizing with her good common sense the truth of Lou's words, that they must soon end. It had tried her at moments—all this young life about—but nevertheless she had enjoyed it with all her heart. Nature had not made Miss Sarah to be an old maid, though circumstances had forced the rôle on her, and she had done well by it—giving herself out to the

world as prim and proper and conservative, and staunch for the things of her house and all that they approved. She had presided over Morty's household now for eighteen years, and had grown outwardly to conform to his ways, and to resent any attack made on them by the outside world. But deep in her heart she longed for something more exciting, more human. She had her friends of her own age with whom she was constantly exchanging calls and visits, and was a pretty hard and relentless gossip underneath all her calm and reserve. But to have had life and gayety and sentiment brought into her household and beneath her very eyes as they had been brought that summer, had been most delightful of all, and she was sorry now at the thought that it was over.

Yet her seventy-year-old heart was warm with romantic and kindly sentiment—at its depths, a little tenderly wistful for old days long before when she had had her part in such things—and her lips were wise with reticence which experience and observation of the world had given her. And so she said no more at

the time, recognizing as she did that Louise was probably right in what she had decided.

A few mornings later, Lou Manton might have been discovered seated in the study at Downham not long after eleven o'clock—an hour that usually was consecrated by her cousin to the hardest mental labor. Morty was not working, however, at the moment.

"And so this is where you write, Morty," she was saying to him. "Do you know, I was just dying to see it. I've thought of you so often here. Isn't it all cunning? Your desk is a shocking mess, though. You'll let me arrange it for you, won't you?"

She moved forward toward the piles of books and papers on the desk top.

"No, no, Louise," cried Morty, bounding forward and stopping her with a horrified gesture.

She sank down in a chair with a laugh of delight, feeling in just the mood for the incident.

Then in a moment, leaning forward and resting her elbows on the desk, on the opposite

side of which her cousin was seated, she let her eyes play upon him and asked coyly:

"You're not displeased to see me, are you, Morty?"

Lou was fond of a white frock, and had put one on this morning. The elbow sleeves, revealing her soft rounded arms, carried Morty's eyes up to the slender fingers supporting her chin, above which a pair of rather wicked brown eyes were surveying him. Poor man, that was the last adjective he would have thought of applying to them perhaps just then.

"No, Louise," he said condescendingly. "I am not displeased to see you here—this once."

She laughed again, ripplingly—it was all such a joke to her!

"You offer me a limited hospitality, you mean," she said. "Tell me, are you still a woman-hater, Morty?"

A pleasant flame was playing about Mortimer Dane's heart, and he felt disposed in everything to be kindly—if not something more. Yet he felt also called upon here to be a little indignant.

"I must insist that your impression is incorrect," he said earnestly. "I never was a woman-hater, Louise. On the contrary, I have always believed in women as necessary —I may say needed in the world. Of course, intellectually—"

He hesitated.

Lou was enjoying it immensely, though she had not yet worked him quite up to the point she wanted.

"What were you going to say?" she asked encouragingly.

"I didn't want to hurt your feelings," he answered, "but I was going to say that of course intellectually, women always remain children. That, however, is not wholly a disadvantage. It is the origin, as Schopenhauer says 'of that cheerfulness which is peculiar to woman and makes her fit to divert man, and in case of need, to console him when he is weighed down by cares.' I believe those are his exact words."

"I see," said Louise, gravely. "You like us just the same, though, as if we were cleverer?"

Morty nodded his head approvingly.

"I think I may say more, Louise," he began.

Her eyes seemed to sparkle directly at him.

"You don't mean you like me, do you, Morty?" she said.

Morty flushed. It had not been what he had been going to say, to be sure, but nevertheless it expressed a sentiment that was weighing on him. Just then, too, Lou let one of those graceful hands of hers drop carelessly onto the desk where it could not help catching his eye. He felt a strange impulse come over him to reach forward and take it.

"I feel that I do," he said, checking this emotion, but feeling very pleasantly disturbed nevertheless as he met her look.

Lou resumed her former attitude of face supported by her two hands.

"I wonder why," she said, appearing to be speculating.

"I—I—" Morty stumbled, finding it hard to express himself just here.

"It can't be because I'm pretty, Morty, can it?" she suggested, letting the laughter, which

she was trying so hard to suppress, appear just a bit.

The question helped him, suggesting something of which he had been thinking. During his cousin's stay in the house, he had been finding Schopenhauer particularly helpful reading, and he was full of him now all the time. His tone assumed the impersonal again.

"By no means," he said incisively. "The beauty of women is very doubtful, Louise. Only the man probably, whose intellect is clouded by the sexual instinct, could call them the *fair* sex. An intelligent person therefore will hesitate some time, I think, before encouraging by his words the delusion that a sex which is stunted, narrow-shouldered, broad-hipped and short-legged—"

"Stop, stop," cried Lou, holding up her hands in mock horror. "You are positively indecent, Morty."

Then it became too much for her, and she sank back in her chair in a paroxysm of laughter.

Dane sat watching her with a smile of faint amusement on his lips. It seemed to him a

remarkably apposite comfirmation of his remark about woman's being but a child. How easily, after all, they were diverted. And yet there was something pleasant about them too. Before the Mantons had come, he had really forgotten what added cheerfulness women lent to a house. All that his favorite exponent of pessimism said about them was true, to be sure. But did that not mean that a man needed them, however—needed a wife, in short?

Poor Morty Dane had had a curious spiritual history—one not wholly creditable to his heart, or his taste, or his will. He had been bred up to books. The Danes had all had a queer mixture of the worldly and the dreaming in them, but Morty for some reason had got apparently rather little of the first side of things. Books were in his blood, and his brain seemed at times to the observer as dry as dust. It was his ambition to be both a scholar and a writer, and even in his young days he had sketched out the plan of his History of German Pessimism, and his Parnassus of the Latin Poets, as well as of other works that were to

be preliminary studies to them. His idea of happiness was a quiet day in his study at Downham; of dissipation, to make an excursion to the book-stores of Boston, New York, or London.

Then he had married, and his wife, whom he had lost some five years afterwards, had been a butterfly. Heaven alone knows how they came to marry—perhaps it was because they were distant cousins, and it is the thing among certain Boston families for cousins, more or less near, to marry. She was a young and beautiful girl at any rate, and loved admiration and gayety and laughter and happiness. She continued to pursue them all during her brief married life, and some people said that Mortimer Dane was jealous of her admirers. It would have been far better for his soul if he had been. Jealousy, however, had been the last thing that had really troubled him. If she had gone her way and let him go his, he perhaps would not have cared—at least would not have perceived it very quickly. But she never thought of that. Her married life had not been long enough to let her get

over a certain fondness for him—it is to be doubted whether any years would have been long enough for such a woman as Amy Dane had been to lose all her fondness for the man she had married—and she was not content to have her happiness without him. She introduced a woman's régime into the house, and scattered a spontaneous joyousness through it. She tried to draw him into society, and his sacred books had little meaning in her eyes. His learning she was proud of, but she had little regard for the ways and means necessary to it. She turned all his habits topsy-turvy, and when he remonstrated, she only laughed at him. Now he was not a man for whom humor had any contagion, and her amusement only irritated him. They never really quarreled, and he had not enough decision of character to acknowledge while she was alive that she bothered him. But after her death, two things took place in his mind. He missed her; and he remembered that she had irritated him. And the result of these forces acting together was that after a time, he began—in order to cover up his mourning,

and also to work off his feeling of irritation which in a sense remained—to suggest to himself and to others that it was all for the best. Very unconsciously at first, did he consider this proposition. But then gradually it came to appeal to him as a good basis of life, and he cultivated it more openly. About as lovely a woman as ever looked out of eyes laughing with the joy of both earth and heaven seemed thus to have been wasted on Morty Dane.

Slowly through the years he had been working out his supposed antipathy to woman. He did miss her—very much at times—and this was the way his weak, stunted heart reacted. A strong man would have lived on his love for such a girl—Morty Dane lived on his denial of such a thing as love. His conversation and his manner were henceforth formulated to support the old theory that women are the bane of mankind. It was easy for him to withdraw from society, for he had never been in it; but he had soon made his house a citadel as well against feminine intrusion. Old, dried, and wrinkled women, well trained in the wishes of man, he exempted from ex-

clusion—he found it necessary for his comfort to do so. His Aunt Sarah Dane had come to him at once to preside over his house, and a corps of elderly women-servants came with her and were always at hand. But seldom did any woman of anywhere near his own age, or younger, enter it. And seldom did he meet one elsewhere. He was, in fact, sincerely afraid of women, and therefore shy and awkward in their presence. But he had in return good revenge, as he thought; and wished only that more of them could hear him. He collected in his mind all the accusations against the sex he could find, and got them off whenever the chance came. He developed quite a pretty sort of mild cynicism —all that is granted to such a man—and could swear in many different ways that women were the devil—and worse; and though his irony was to the observer more ridiculous and pathetic than cutting, it had served Morty Dane for fifteen or eighteen years now fairly satisfactorily as the expression of what, in a more energetic man, we might be tempted to call the sexual life.

But now since the coming of Lou Manton and her girls to his house, he had felt a change coming over his attitude. There had been a certain pleasantness about the house—a sup of wine and interest at the table of life—which at first he had been unable to account for, but which at last his old, unfilled heart had vaguely recognized as due to these pretty, illusive, unaccountable creatures that were his guests. Lou, as must be perfectly clear, had not by any means kept her bargain that her coming should not interfere with his mode of life, and many were the ways in which the three had laughed at, and teased and petted him. But he had found himself by no means as severe in return as he might have been expected to be. Instead his mind had got at times filled with fancies, rather weak and vague to be sure, that while they disquieted him greatly, yet sent an uneasy sort of joy pulsing through his veins. And these fancies grew quite rampant now as he sat there with his charming cousin in front of him in his study.

He checked the meditations he had been

pursuing with the thought that perhaps he had been too outspoken and should apologize.

"I am very sorry, Louise," he began in a voice he meant to be kind.

Lou suddenly leaped up from the chair where she was sitting, came round where he was and perched herself on the desk beside him.

"Never mind, Morty," she said, wiping the tears cautiously from her eyes with her handkerchief. "You won't have to bother about us long. I must be leaving some time next week. We've all had such a good time with you here, though."

"Leaving?" echoed Morty dismally. "You needn't do that just yet, Lou."

"You're awfully nice," she said with a laugh. "But I really must go, you know."

A resolution had been gathering itself in Morty's mind slowly, but cumulatively, as resolutions always gathered in Dane minds.

"You needn't leave at all, Lou," he said precisely. "I should be very glad to marry you if you would like."

It seemed to him that he should accompany

such a statement by something more substantial. Therefore he reached forward and took her hand. The touch of it somehow made him feel that he had been right in what he had said.

Lou tried hard to control her emotions. Though after all, it was something of a triumph.

"Do you mean you are actually proposing to me, Morty?" she said, looking up to him with a smile.

"I believe that that is the term applied," he said gravely.

He found himself now growing very eager. Really, he had forgotten in all these years what a delightful thing the companionship of women was.

"I most earnestly hope you will consider it favorably," he added, bending forward.

She was having too good a time to cut it short. It would do no harm even to let him keep her hand a moment longer.

"You dear old Morty," she said, helping him on with a glance from her eyes. "Do you really believe I would be a good one to 'divert

you and in case of need to console you when you are weighed down by cares'? I believe those are the exact words."

"I think I may say even more than that," began Morty.

But what Morty thought he might admit further, never was known by Lou Manton. At that moment, there was a light rap at the door, followed immediately and before she had time to disengage herself from her somewhat embarrassing position, by the turning of the knob and the entrance of Dicky Dane.

So sudden was his appearance and so unmistakable was the scene before him that no word needed to or could be spoken by any one of the three people. It was common enough for Richard Dane to run in of a morning on his brother, and the latter's study was the last place in the world where it would ever have occurred to the clergyman that it was necessary to make a deliberate entrance. For a moment he was too surprised to speak or move. Then suddenly, his face seemed to grow grave, he said quietly, "Oh, I beg your pardon," and in

another second had closed the door again, and his footsteps were audible retreating down the hall without.

The gravity in the clergyman's expression seemed to find a mirror in Lou Manton's eyes. Quietly and in a manner quite unlike her former one, she released her hand and stood listening to the retreating steps.

The mirth had all vanished from her eyes when she looked up at last,

"I am very sorry that this should have happened, Morty," she said quietly.

The incident had made comparatively little impression on Mortimer Dane.

"Oh, Dick won't mind in the least," he said.

"Very likely not," answered Lou, a touch of feeling coming into her eyes that had no meaning to the man in front of her. "You have been awfully kind, Morty, but what you have asked is quite impossible. I want to thank you for your goodness to us all this summer. I shall leave here a week from to-day."

"You don't mean you're not going to marry me, Louise?" cried Morty, his voice rising in a note of surprise.

"I know it won't really distress you when you come to think of it," she said with a laugh that was bitterer than she knew. "I should be a horrible nuisance and bother, you'd find, after all. I won't trouble you any longer this morning."

She moved toward the door. Morty sprang after her.

"But, Louise—" he cried.

"Don't talk about it any more, please," she said sharply, with a touch of anger. "It was unfortunate my coming here, anyway. Go back to Schopenhauer and you'll be all right, Morty."

She arrested herself as she turned toward the door and looked back at him. Her voice trembled a little.

"That wasn't quite fair, either. You've been awfully nice and I appreciate it. Good-by."

She hurried out of the door before poor Morty could say another word, leaving him standing there in the middle of the floor quite without rudder, sails, or compass.

CHAPTER XII

NEXT DAY

THE details of the wedding were all delightful to arrange. There were to be six bridesmaids—besides Meg, who was to be maid-of-honor—who were to collect at Downham Hundreds on the succeeding Tuesday and were to be gathered partly from Mrs. Epsom's and Bill Dane's girls, and partly from friends of Clare's when she was at school, in France, or on the Hudson. There were all the circumstances of bridal finery to be got out of the way early—for Lou was determined that Clare should not look all frayed-out by last minute tryings-on when she went up the aisle at church. There was the breakfast after the service, which she and Sarah Dane were doing together. There were the many presents which were daily arriving from the great clan, and from friends who had rediscovered of late the Manton branch of the Danes. There were

reporters to answer personally and by telephone—for Clare's wedding was served up in all the Sunday editions as the first great social event of the season. And lastly throughout it all, there was for Mrs. Manton that sense of achievement, of relief after waiting, of looking forward to the future, which only a woman who had had to spend the preceding fifteen years in precariousness, could realize. She felt she ought to be supremely contented; and yet the fact was that she was anything but that.

About four on the next afternoon after her interview with Morty in the library, she got up from some letters she was doing and put on her hat. She said to herself with a sigh that perhaps she had been too closely occupied, that she needed a breath of air and would go for a walk. But underneath she knew that there was more than that, and she turned at once after she got out of the house into a path leading over the fields to the village, blushing a little as she put away from her the thought that it would also lead very close to Dicky Dane's.

Now the day was a trifle coolish—the sort

of weather that forms a pleasant excuse for an open fire, and just a little while before she started out, it happened that Dicky Dane, coming into his parsonage from a couple of parochial errands, had entered his library and stood a moment before the logs burning on the hearth.

For the last thirty hours he had been able to think of only one thing. He was thinking of it now until, with an imprecation and a snap of the fingers, he laughed rather jeeringly and asked what was the use.

It was a time of the afternoon—about tea time—when usually he found it profitable to work at his desk. He had two sermons to prepare for the coming Sunday—it was to be the first day when he had a second service—and he had not made much progress that week. He had little heart for it, to be sure, now, but, still, they had got to be turned out, and perhaps it would divert his mind, to go to work. So he sat himself down at his desk, took out a manuscript which he had begun before, and tried to work.

But somehow it was no go. He tried hard to concentrate his mind, but the other subject kept coming back and getting the better of his endeavors.

He got up after a while and stood at his window, staring moodily out. Then suddenly he took his hands out of his pockets with a motion of surprise and peered intently through the pane over the lawn and up the hill.

He could see from his position clear up over the two-thirds of a mile to his brother's house, and coming down through the orchard at that moment he caught sight in the distance of his cousin, Lou Manton.

For a couple of minutes, he watched her, his face a little paler than it had been before. Where was she going, he wondered, and which way would she turn? Probably she was coming down to the village for a walk. He saw her at last take the right hand path.

A question was being fought out in his heart. For a moment, he stood staring at the scene, after she had passed out of sight. Then with a tightening of the lips and a hur-

ried step, he crossed the room, picked up his hat and stick in the hall, and going out of the house, walked down toward the road.

He crossed the latter and took a short-cut that would intercept the path Louise was following. He was full of mockery for himself, called himself all sorts of names, but nevertheless timed his pace so that he would just about meet his cousin at the intersection of the two paths.

Lou was not so far away when he came out on the main one, and being unprepared for the meeting just at that moment, appeared at first somewhat taken aback.

"How are you, Lou?" he asked, as he came to meet her and raised his hat.

By that time she had just a second in which to recover herself.

"Hullo, Dick," she said, nodding a little carelessly to him. "What are you doing here?"

She had already stolen a look at his face and was trying to make out what she read there.

"Looking for you," he said in a non-com-

mittal tone. "Saw you taking the path down the hill."

"How nice!" she exclaimed, her heart giving her a mixture of emotion, though her face showed, if anything, rather less feeling than before. "Will you come for a walk with me, Dicky?"

"Or will you come over to the parsonage and have some tea?" he responded.

His eyes were surveying her face and his lips wore a smile that seemed to her rather quizzical.

"Would it be quite *comme il faut?*" she said trying to laugh in her usual provoking way.

Somehow she felt she did not succeed.

"Won't you risk it?" he answered quietly.

"Let's walk, if you don't mind, Dicky," she said, looking at him for the first time.

There was something in the look and in the tone that for one brief second drove the smile from his lips and brought a touch of softness to his eyes. Then he swore at himself cynically.

"Be an ass at your own peril!" he inwardly exclaimed.

Outwardly he stuck his stick under his arm and his hands in his pockets and replied:

"Anything you like."

He struck out beside her along the path.

"Summer's about over, isn't it?" she said after a while. "We're going to leave a week from to-day you know."

"Indeed," said Dick. "I'm rather surprised at that."

He had not intended to mention the happening of the day before, but he *was* surprised as far as that went, and his words jumped out unexpectedly to himself, their tone making perfectly apparent to Lou what they meant.

And that angered Lou. She stopped and turned on him almost fiercely.

"Why under the sun should it surprise you?" she said, her eyes flashing.

"You're rather fierce," he said, still smiling. "Can't you guess, Lou?"

A blush overspread her face—to her own chagrin—and she looked away.

"Not that I meant to allude to it," he added with a laugh. It sounded rather bitter both in his own ears and in hers.

They had both stopped and neither was looking at the other.

"You entirely misinterpreted what you saw, Dicky," she said in a low voice.

"Impossible," he said sarcastically.

Then Lou turned on him.

"You are perfectly cruel," she said, her eyes flashing.

His dropped before them. A sudden wave of joy rushed over him—to be met the next moment by one of cynicism. And yet to persist.

Neither spoke for a moment. Dicky stood looking at the ground, idly switching a bit of aster with his cane. Then Mrs. Manton moved slowly on, and he fell in beside her, looking off across the fields, and unwilling to believe his thoughts.

"What did you mean by your last remark?" he said quietly, after a while.

"That's for you to find out," she answered snappishly, provoked that she had given herself away.

He laughed.

"We're very much cousins, aren't we?

Rather hard on Morty, though, I should think."

He distrusted everything, and yet he hoped fearfully that she would give him some further explanation. But Lou made no answer.

Her presence, what she had said, worked upon his emotions. The fact is, the two had had rather an affair, twenty years or more before, and Dicky Dane for his part had never quite got over it. Louise Petersham, though at the time she had preferred Jack Manton, had even then decidedly liked her cousin, and now in coming back at this later season of life into his circle, she had found that the things Dicky stood for had grown on her, while those connected with her brilliant, irresponsible, charming husband had lost a little of their attractiveness. And so through the summer, quietly, subtly, restrained by a certain caution coming from experience on the part of both, but waxing all the more powerful perhaps on that account, the whole affair had sprung up again. And then Dane had come the day before on that scene in his brother's study.

He could not stand her silence for long.

"Do you mean to say he was not making love to you?" he asked.

A faint smile appeared on Lou's lips.

"No, I don't mean to say that," she said coolly.

A flash of anger ran over him. He remembered her of old. To flirt, to lure men on, to play with them, was part of her nature. And yet for a woman of her age—

"It seems to me—" he began indignantly, searching about in his mind for the phrase that would be most cutting.

She could feel very well what his mood was. Her eyes turned and looked directly into his.

"Don't be a fool, Dicky," she said coldly.

For a moment, his anger increased. His face flushed. Then suddenly he came to himself, saw the situation and burst into bitter laughter.

"You are right, Lou," he said, meeting her eyes. "Thanks."

She looked away again now. Somehow she did not want him to laugh.

He in turn was thinking what her words meant.

"So you're not going to marry Morty?" he asked meditatively.

"You're rather a goose," said she.

The words thrilled him. "I wonder—" he began, his caution not yet leaving him.

"Do you remember long ago?" he finished his question.

She knew by his tone what he meant.

"That was long ago, wasn't it?" she answered in a low voice.

"You still like to play with hearts, I judge," he said thoughtfully.

She did not reply this time. For her part, she was dully wondering what Dicky did feel, or if he did feel anything. All seemed so remote, so impossible to her.

And then, suddenly, in a restrained tone, quite different from his last, he spoke the first sensible words he had uttered.

"For my part, I've never got over it."

She stopped and her breath came faintly.

"What about you, Lou?" he said.

He took both her hands and drew her a bit

toward him. The alder bushes were close on both sides of the path, but even had they not been, perhaps this middle-aged and unromantic man would at that moment have forgotten the fact. Dick had felt sometimes in the depths of his heart that it would come out all right and yet before he had not been able to realize it. But now, suddenly, though his question had not been answered, he knew that his time had come.

Lou Manton's face was pink, and for a moment, she could not raise her eyes to his.

"You don't think it would all seem very foolish in us, Dicky?" she said.

He did not care very much how things seemed, or realize that they seemed at all. He had drawn her closer to him by this time and the eyes of each were at last looking into the other's.

"Can it be that after all these years—" he cried.

In words, he did not finish his lover's exclamation of doubt, of wonder, of joy. There was no less incoherency in their little scene and mutual confession than there would have been

between younger people, though perhaps they laughed somewhat more amusedly as they came slowly back over the fields together, and chatted with a little less awe over themselves, the past and the present, than they would have done earlier in their career. Even in their mood of deep happiness, life had taught them to see and ridicule its superficial ironies.

They were fearfully and surely happy nevertheless.

"Shall I come up to dinner?" said Dick, as he left her at the beginning of his brother's grounds.

"Why don't you wait till to-morrow?" said Lou, pausing to think.

"You don't think Morty'll mind?" he said, a trifle disturbed by her tone.

"Not really. Let's say nothing about it though till after the wedding. The young people ought to have the field all to themselves till then. I shall leave Morty's next Friday, and then we'll proceed to surprise the world."

So they agreed on a postponement in announcing the news—a postponement that possibly had its results for other people.

"What will you do with yourself now, Dicky?" she said a little wistfully, as they tried for the twentieth time to say good-by.

"Go back to work," he said with a smile. "Life—even sermons—must go on, though I am so fearfully happy. But you can't keep me from just dropping in this evening, whatever you say."

And so they parted. Dicky Dane went back to his study, and, strange to say, after a while, to his next Sunday's sermon. On the whole, he was not an inspired preacher, nor one who gave very much of himself from the pulpit. Life was too much of a drawn battle, he would have held, to permit much emotion in either direction. Clever and interesting sermons he preached—for he was a clever and interesting man; and wise ones too, for he had seen much of the world, and many of his parishioners, no doubt, learned safe and comfortable roads to walk down the world over from what he said to them in church. But he could not write nor speak glibly of God or Christ or love or heaven, and perhaps many missed a

certain warmth they would have liked in his sermons.

Sometimes Dicky Dane missed it himself—for he believed more or less in all these things, and yearned at times to convey them to his flock. At moments he charged himself with being a poor and unworthy priest, and had thoughts of giving up his parish and profession. But old habits always prevailed, and he would console himself later on for his deficiencies by saying that after all he was one of the good forces that kept the unstable world and the unstable church in the traces in these fly-away modern days. And he would go ahead, doing in his own way what good he found to do.

He had adjusted all his nature to a life of moderate happiness, and to joys and troubles that about evened up. And probably—though deeper down, there was something more strenuous—he had adjusted his religion and his sermons to the same scale of things.

But to-day everything seemed different. Years before he had been madly in love with his cousin Lou, and all through the years had

never quite forgotten it. That summer, life had stirred up a little in him after its long sleep, and he had dreamed very vividly at moments that there might be something in it for him still. But experience had made him cautious, and he had till to-day never departed from his long ingrained superficial attitude that life was a jest. And it seemed now almost too good to be true. His old companions of a score of years, prudence and a mild kind of skepticism, kept coming back to him and whispering to him to go slow, and that joy was deceptive. In a sense, it was probable that they would only gradually, if ever, let the smile of questioning get away from Dicky Dane's lips.

And yet he was wonderfully happy now—with a joy more like a young man's in completeness than he would have believed possible. Not in intensity—he could recognize that the sunshine in which he sat was the mellow, half-aslant light of September, and not the fierce, all-consuming rays of June. Nevertheless, he felt supremely moved in all his being, and saying to himself therefore that

God had been very good to him, in these latter days, he dipped his pen into the inkstand and started away at his interrupted sermon. And it seemed as he wrote, as if he had dipped the pen too into the melted sunshine of religion, for to-day he really painted things that usually he only sketched—faith and love and the worth-whileness of things unseen. His pen, as has been said, was always clever. But now there was a body of feeling and faith behind it, and as he wrote, that faith took form and stood out clear before him, so that his own heart was moved again by it and he knew that it would have power to move others. And thus at last, just about the time the dressing bell rang, he folded up the sheets in order and put them away in a drawer, with the knowledge that he had written the conclusion, at least, of a good sermon.

CHAPTER XIII

CLARE MANTON GOES TO CHURCH

ON the afternoon of the next Sunday, all the family at Mortimer Dane's had departed for church except Clare Manton. The latter lingered indolently before the fire of one of the downstairs rooms of the house.

Alfred Dane, who had walked back with her up the hill after all the family had dined at the parsonage—whither the day before by the way he had gone to take up his temporary residence—had suggested that he should stay with her.

"Pooh, Alfie, run along," she had said a trifle impatiently. "You know you love to go."

"But, Clare," Alfred had interrupted, trying to seize her hands in his—for these last few weeks Clare had quite intoxicated all his senses—"it will be the last Sunday before the wedding, and it seems as if—"

She stepped back from him, evading his touch and laughing with what, though he did not perceive it, was a touch of irritation. There were moments when she was with Alfred that he undoubtedly got on her nerves.

"Don't be silly," she said. "Run along and do what I tell you. We shall have enough Sundays together as far as that goes—I want to have a quiet afternoon all by myself now."

Clare's brutality—she never really pretended that she was in love with him—sometimes surprised Alfred, and would have hurt him, had he not in his ignorance taken it to be part of the game of love which his fascinating fiancée was teaching him. He had cast two or three more imploring glances at her after the remark, but then finding her quite unaffected by them, had gone away, consoling himself with the thought that soon the time was coming when she would want him always with her. Poor fellow! it never occurred to him that her manner was anything more than a bit of indirect feminine allurement.

Then Clare had gone in and thrown herself into a chair before the fire with a feeling of

great relief and luxury that she was to be alone. For, as has been said, a nervous rebellion at the part she had chosen often when the Danes were about drove her nearly insane.

Now, however, left alone by herself in the Sunday afternoon stillness of the great house and with just enough fire on the hearth to be companionable and restful, the lines of tension smoothed out from her face, and with a sigh of satisfaction she curled herself snugly up in the great chair.

As she sat there, her elbow on the arm of the chair, her chin supported by her long, tapering fingers, and her eyes turned meditatively on the bit of blaze, an observer would have marked a touch of smile, now amused, now triumphant, come upon her lips. Her face was at its prettiest; and yet the not altogether agreeable expression, the firm lines of her mouth, and the look of a proud, almost insolent mastery of life in her eyes, gave it an aspect of worldly hardness. For Clare in her turn was thinking of her competency—of how things had come out just as she had planned them, and of all the infinite allurement that life has for us at

those moments when we can perceive its willingness thus to yield to our will. And there is little true or lovely or deep thought possible, after all, to us in such a mood—at least when it is unmixed with some higher one.

Yet the observer, if he had been attentive, would have noticed that once at least Clare's expression of triumph wavered. The corners of her lips relaxed, a certain softness came into her eyes, the whole expression of her face deepened, at the same time that a look of inability and fear entered into it. Her breath came quickly for a couple of seconds, and the blood seemed to rush from her cheeks. She nervously crossed and uncrossed her feet; then hung, rapt and motionless for an instant, her eyes staring into the fire. A long sigh came from her lips.

This wavering, however, seemed hardly more than an episode. Gently the sweeter expression faded from her eyes, and the smile of assurance came back. Slowly she drew from the concealment of the lace at her throat a letter she had placed there for safety, and held it

then meditatively for a moment unopened in her hand.

Two days earlier the letter had come from Roger Calthrop. She had expected long before to hear from him, or rather, to see him—for eagerly she had longed to find him once again flitting back to her as a helpless moth to a searing flame. But he had not come again to Downham. And now here was his letter.

When Calthrop had gone away that Sunday afternoon a fortnight earlier, it had been with a fierce resentment in his heart against Clare Manton. For all his pride had been wounded and was very angry in him—and pride is very much mingled in with masculine love. He had shown his heart to a woman, and it had not been enough to win her. She had rejected it not even wholly tenderly, but openly measuring it against worldly advantage and letting him see plainly that, compared with that latter, it was not worthy in her eyes. That had hurt Roger to the quick—for like all worldly men he had always cautiously kept the softer, gentler side of him from ever coming

into competition with the hard, unrelaxing forces of the world, the strength of which he knew so well. No cities had he ever sat down before which he did not know that he could take—lightly and on the surface he had worn a heart, but the deeper one beneath he had never let be seen. And now when at last he had been moved out of his caution, and had looked into a woman's eyes, wholly and honestly carried away from every thought but of her, she had mockingly shown him the strong bronze gates which should forever keep him out of her life, and had thrown him back, bruised and broken and laughed at for his plea. And all his pride, wounded but furious, rose up against the hardness that had hurt him, and separated him into hostility toward its representative that had dealt the blow.

He hated Clare at moments as he went back to Boston that night—hated her alike with all the strength and all the weakness of his soul, daring to think evil things of her and to call her evil names in the fierceness of the fury that was on him. She had led him deliber-

ately on from the first, she had played him with diabolical cunning; she had sought him out; she had given soft glimpses of what she had let him think was love on her side; she had tortured him; she had allured; she had left, in short, no stone unturned that might bring him at last unprotected and helpless to her feet, that there she might strike the final fatal blow! What had she cared for the warning she had given him that she was going to marry Alfred? What had she meant him to care? Had it stood in the least in the way of her deliberately seeking him, had it kept her from coming to him in Boston and consciously pulling down the barrier of distance he had tried to put between them? Had it ever in any way made the slightest difference in her cool allurement of him? He called her a flirt; he called her utterly selfish; he called her the worst name a woman can be called. And then suddenly at that last, he broke down, a wave of tenderest love swept over him, and he cried as his heart seemed to falter in its beating. "Oh, no—forgive me—no, she is not that—God, dear God, let her be mine—let me save

her from myself. O Clare—Clare—my Clare—"

His hands clenched together till the nails entered the flesh as he gasped the words out there in the train and he dreamed for a moment of her in all her loveliness, again saw glimpses of the heart he had caught behind her hardness, and was full of an unspeakable tenderness and protectiveness for her. And then slowly, the hatred, and the alienation, the thought of what she had done to him, came back over him, and he felt his love driven away by bitterness and hateful recriminations. He angrily pushed her away from himself, and jeered recklessly at the world because even in thought he had let her come near.

The differing phases of his love for Clare that Calthrop saw that evening as he went back to town only grew stronger as the days drew on toward his sailing and the wedding. A despair of doing anything more toward winning Clare settled down over him, and yet there were moments when a wildly torturing and convulsive thought arose in his heart and told him he still must, he still *could* win her.

Then the bitter, sullen resentment would have its turn, and he would wish her ill, only to be overcome soon by the deepest remorse, the tenderest calling of his soul to her soul.

Through the first week, this conflict kept him paralyzed and motionless; but as the second came on, an intense agony of indecision took possession of him. The most terrible times of life are those when some momentous decision is pressing on us, with the moment that it will be too late to decide facing us to tell us that we must not delay in acting. Roger's heart was weak and raw with the swinging now this way, now that, of his love —soft now to the point of tears to go down to Downham and speak with Clare—aloof again and jeering at his weakness.

But out of the two, there came at last a feeling that was their composite, a dignity that told him he could not—after the way she had dismissed him—go again to plead with her, and that yet had something of his deeper love in it—the feeling that he must say farewell to her and that he might make that farewell in itself a manly plea. He was to leave Boston

Sunday evening on the Federal Express for Washington, where he was to spend Monday in executing some details preparatory to his mission in London, taking the train back on the evening of that day to New York, whence he was to sail on Tuesday morning. And on Thursday night, he sat down and wrote to Clare the letter which now on the Sunday, as she sat by the fire at Downham Hundreds, she was about to read for the twentieth time.

"Dear Clare:" were the words that she saw, when she unfolded it at last and let her eyes once more linger over it. "After your preference for the good things of life expressed with such certainty, I shouldn't venture to plead with you again wholly on my own behalf. In fact, I shall not plead with you any more at all. This is simply to say good-by—I am leaving for Washington on the Federal Express Sunday night, and sailing on the *Luretania* Tuesday. But I can't let it go without begging you for your own sake, as well as for others, to see things differently. O Clare, don't you know that there is only one way to happiness—through love? O my own Clare,

dear Clare, tell me to come to you—it is not too late yet. Anything is better than making the fearful mistake of marrying only for advantage. Can you not see it?—do you not believe it? Let me come to you before it is too late—let me tell Alfred—come away with me without telling him at all—anything, so that you will be worthy of yourself, of your love. You do not, you cannot, doubt me!

"If still you persist in thinking there are other things better than love, however—then this must be good-by. In either case, I am yours always."

It was a manly note, and impressed Clare as such. No words could have been better fitted to convey to her that touch of hardness answering to her own which was mixed with his love, than those which were so mingled of emotion and restraint. Deep down in her heart she was crying out madly for him, and for that reason she hurried a trifle over his plea, and mocked as she read. And then she put the note down in her lap and went back to her thinking.

Roger had done well in not coming to her

again. Our best allies in women's hearts are their own fire and longing—the power of their love that once entirely moved, swells, and of its own soft, but fierce and mighty, force, becomes irrepressible. Provided that the fire has once got thoroughly alight, absence, silence, on a lover's part, will often do more than insistent pleas. If Roger had come again to her, Clare would have aroused all her selfishness into action to fight against him. As it was now, she had felt safe, and it was, though she did not fully realize it, the call of her love that had been rising and waxing strong, through the last few days.

She sat there after she had read the letter for some time, her eyes turned toward the fire, but her soul by their expression clearly very far away. Then with a sigh, followed by a curl of her under lip, she started up from her chair. The house suddenly seemed to her frightfully oppressive. Perhaps a walk over the fields would help her, she thought—so, going upstairs, she put on her hat, and went out.

The last days of September had come, but the air was listless and drowsy, and when she

stopped to listen, a summer stillness lay over everything. She passed slowly out of the home grounds and on to the cut fields beyond, conscious of the faint undertone—as of an orchestra far away—of crickets chirring. In the distance, sounded the intermittent puffing of a railway train, and from some road off to the eastward, the faint crowing of cocks.

It seemed to Clare for the first few minutes as if she were in the early morning, only half awake. The open air and walking before long, however, brought her back her calmness and her coolness.

"Heigho!" she thought, as her mind went over the letter, "not a very successful last pang, I consider. Evidently he's got the strength to stick to it, however—I would have wagered my life I should have seen him yesterday or to-day."

Her heart throbbed smartingly for a moment, as she thought that in a few hours now, the man of whom she was dreaming would be going out of her life for ever and ever. She had dreamed and half believed that he would come again to her to say good-by—that she

had that before her still. But now it was too late.

"Just as well he didn't perhaps," she said at last with decided bitterness. "He knows my selfishness pretty well, it seems."

Again her heart for a second seemed to fail her, and she stopped short in her walk, catching for her breath. Then the color came slowly back into her cheeks.

"Little fool!" she said, with a harsh laugh, addressing herself. "You can't have your cake and eat it too, you know."

She walked on again, increasing her pace a little, feeling that she must throw off her hesitancy. Gradually she got her grip on herself once more, throwing back her shoulders and drawing in the late summer air till the tension of her lips relaxed. Her mood changed, and a sense of deep content came over her.

"How glorious it is out here!" she thought. "Why under the sun should any one be unhappy in such a world as this!"

The direction she had taken led north over a series of gently rolling hills, mingled with occasional meadow and wood, bounded on the

west by a walnut-lined road, and falling away eastward toward the marshes and distant ocean. Practically the whole east half of Downham was owned by one or the other of the Dane family, and was kept up by them all under the most efficient system of cultivation. The walls and fences were perfectly made, the latter of a dull gray design peculiar to the estates, with picturesque gates which the father of the present "boys" had picked up somewhere in England; the roads were smooth and perfect. You could walk for several miles without stepping off Dane land, or without failing to see some unobtrusive but definite sign that marked it as theirs.

Now there is no power in the world more glorious than the power thus to hold and beautify the land—to rule and trim and plant and vary and divide it; to bring out the loveliness that God put into it but which is never fully apparent till man has taken a hand; to be *homo naturae additus;* to give its fields and its vistas meanings and names, and to stamp it with the thoughts of home and birth and death and love and sorrow and joy, yes, and

of sin, that have been associated with it. Never is family pride so understandable and justifiable, as when it bases itself on long inwrought connection with a beautiful stretch of earth and water and sky.

And this proud estate was very much in Clare Manton's mind as she walked on. Great people, as few in New England or America were great, the Danes had been and were; wisely and understandingly and considerately great, to be sure, but nevertheless, firmly and unyieldingly so. The signs of their pride were all about her as she walked on over these soft southern New England fields that at their best are so hauntingly beautiful; and her heart, throwing off now its indecision, gloried in every sign and in its meaning for her. For were they not hers—these proud signs of man's worth—were they not to be hers more surely and openly still? Did they not represent what her birth and her cleverness had brought her—what she meant in the world?

She was carried away by the delight and completeness of the moment. Her feet and

her skirts slushed and rustled cheerfully through the stubble as she walked across the field between the stookes of corn and directed her steps in the general direction of a slight elevation which rose gently, like a well-formed brow, ahead. Her greedy, sensuous, form-loving eyes drank in eagerly the perfect pageantry of early autumn about her—the fields covered everywhere with Queen Anne's lace and fall dandelions; the ditchy brooks sketched here and there in the deeper purple varieties of wild asters; the group of oaks, shrub-like on the rise. And when she reached the latter, a scene of still greater loveliness lay before her, as the Dane lands blended in with one or another of the village houses—the trees showing clear and clean against the horizon, the shaven fields, the contrast of greens, browns and yellows in various patches still standing or already cut, red chimneys peering out of foliage, a gray roof, the indistinct angles of a house, so hazy as not to be seen, but guessed rather or imagined. Then her heart and her eyes swelled with delight.

"And it's all to be more or less yours, you

lucky girl!" she exclaimed to herself, with a ripple of that laughter which was the distillation of her joyous nature. "It's just as infinitely satisfactory—as forever and ever—as England, as far as I can see. Roger was pretty nice, but this—"

She gave herself a shake, as if to be assured that she had really awakened from some dream. It actually seemed to her like a fever in which she had been for the last weeks—these promptings to choose a lower fate than that which was now to be hers. She had had a hard fight, and sometimes—yes, only a few minutes ago—it had seemed as if the fever were going to be too much for her. But now at last, she had conquered and was safe. And oh! what a relief it was that she knew now that she wanted to be safe!

She turned and went down a pasture lane to the main road which descended toward the village. An automobile passed her slowly, and the occupants turned round to look curiously at her after it had passed. It flashed over her that they were saying to one another some such thing as "There's Clare Manton,

who's going to marry Alfred Dane, you know, this week." Her picture and the wedding had been much in the papers, and from the intense look of the women passengers, she felt that to them she was a great figure.

A little later on she met two girls, the daughters of the overseer on one of the estates, who were taking a Sunday afternoon walk. She knew them and smiled, and they bowed to her interestedly. They at any rate, she felt, as soon as she passed, would be full of human and admiring curiosity about her. And such thoughts and what they represented were by no means without their pleasantness to Clare.

"I must be very nice to them," she thought benevolently, remembering the girls' faces, and thinking quite contentedly and full of peace of the future. "Some day I'll ask them up to tea."

She had come now in her descent of the hill to a point which brought her very near to Downham Church.

"Not half bad!" she cried, catching a glimpse of its brown buttresses through the trees, with

a thrill of pleasure. "Really, it's a little love of a church."

Her thoughts flew to the scene on the succeeding Wednesday, and a sense of satisfaction that all would be so fitting came over her. She walked toward the building with a feeling of unexpected interest.

The church at Downham had been built about twenty years before, when the older colonial meeting-house that had stood for over a century had burnt, and Dicky Dane, who had practically paid for it out of his own pocket, was proud of it. It was an exact copy of the parish church of the old English Downham in Wiltshire, and as Clare came upon it this Sunday afternoon that was so soft with all the cultivated scene, not only did the architecture but also something of the atmosphere seem to have been successfully transplanted from the old to the New England. Amid the ancient graves that had clustered about the older church, the old trees of the churchyard bent over it, and with the ivy that the twenty years had succeeded in growing, it looked hardly less charming a bit than if it had been

done, perhaps, by William of Wykeham.

Clare as she approached the church caught the sound of singing through the open windows, and a smile expressing something like pity for those within rested on her lips. At that moment, there seemed something peculiarly irksome and impossible to her in the thought of worship.

Nevertheless when she came to it, it occurred to her that she would step into the churchyard. She would like to get a nearer glimpse for a moment of the building.

There was no one about as she went in, and she paused to listen, catching the words of the chant. It so chanced that they were singing those wonderful words of Mary in the Magnificat which St. Luke has brought us in a gospel always peculiarly antipathetical to the princes of this world.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble and meek.

"He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away."

Clare caught the words plainly, and a low laugh of amusement came to her lips.

"In this world—hardly," she commented, thinking with a deep sense of relief that never more now need she, for one, to take her chances with the humble and meek.

She did not, however, leave the scene so immediately as she had expected, for there was something so sweet about the plain-song of the chant and in keeping with the afternoon that it attracted her and made her linger. Half the windows of the church were open, and she found she could approach a rear one, and, quite unobserved herself, peer into the interior. There was her Uncle Dick in his black robe, just coming forward to the lectern to read a lesson, and there well to the front on the center aisle was the pew that held Morty Dane and the people from his house.

"Really, a very pretty picture—" she said with amusement, as she surveyed her relatives. "All properly devout and serious too. Mother's expression, in fact, quite matches her hat. How rapt she seems to be in Uncle Dick's elocution! I wonder if she likes him."

For a moment the thought interested and amused her, but in another she had dismissed

it as having no foundation in fact. Lou and Dicky had kept their feelings pretty well to themselves. It would not have mattered much to her after all if she had observed surer signs of what had happened. It was all just then a drama to her, the picture within,—a drama staged upon the scene of her own contentment of mind with a contrast as pleasant as the contrast of the words being spoken there in the church against the stillness of the afternoon without.

Still as the service went on, she lingered by the window—perhaps as much as anything else, from a certain interest she found in observing things that at that moment she profoundly disbelieved. And yet she found growing up within her as the moments passed a certain *rapport* with the atmosphere within. After the offering—it was one of Dick Dane's Unitarian ideas that this should be taken before the sermon, so that, as he said, people's minds should not be distracted by the thought of money at the end of the service—she saw her uncle mount the pulpit to preach. Usually she never paid any attention to sermons, find-

ing them good opportunities to think over her plans undisturbed. But on this afternoon, a certain vague curiosity stirred in her to hear what he would say.

"I wonder if he believes much of it," she thought, as her eyes searched curiously the rather firm-set face looking down from the pulpit. "Who knows but I shall when I have several hundred thousands a year. Still, Uncle Dicky's not a bad sort."

Just then, for the first time in the last half hour, the thought of Roger Calthrop and what he meant to her, swept curiously over Clare. She drew in her breath sharply, and her fingers for a moment closed nervously on the rough stone of the church against which she was leaning. No—she would *not* think of him. She was too sure of herself, things were too much as she wanted, for that. She had no intention of being a fool, and she bent forward to listen to the clergyman, tightening her lips.

It is not probably often the reader's privilege to assist at the preparation of a sermon. He has done so, however, with that which

Dicky Dane was now beginning to preach in Downham Church. It so chanced that, it being the first evening service since May, and it having seemed the proper thing to him therefore that he should start out well, he had saved for the afternoon the sermon which he had written under the inspiration of a softened heart. And although the best of it did not come till later, yet being a new and better man generally himself in these days Dicky started out with a ring and a conviction that perhaps his people did not often hear.

The uneasiness that Clare had felt, died down for a moment, as he began. But then slowly, strange to say, it seemed to come back to her. A certain something in the words, the tone, got hold of her heart more than she liked it to be touched. She felt vaguely that she had better leave, perhaps, that it was not quite the place for her; that she had made a mistake. But for once the rather slow Dane temperament in the pulpit had become magnetic, and she found it hard, without a special effort, to break away. There was a certain artistic sense of pleasure, too, in the realization of

power being exercised over her. So she lingered on, but with an uneasiness that grew. Then suddenly the sense rushed over her that perhaps it was already too late—that she was in dire danger—that at any moment the results of her good, triumphant plans might be swept away from her,—that she could not now get away.

The sermon was on faith—faith, not necessarily theological, but as an element in all life. It had told what faith was and had shown some rather moving instances of it in common life—had formed in fact just enough of a harrow to break through the crust of Clare's cynicism and bring all her better impulses into the light. Then suddenly it seemed to rise to a personal height and speak directly to her.

"And oh," said Dicky, "use this faith. If the chance ever comes to you to decide between a lower thing that will satisfy for a moment and a higher thing that means patience and perhaps suffering, but above all, love, and you are sore tempted to take the former and go down the easy road of life, oh pause a moment, my brothers, and think of

those of whom I have been telling you here—of our blessed Master, of the martyrs, of the loyal people of daily life, who knew that there was no real happiness except in truth and courage, and therefore chose that road and found it at last leading to joy. Think of them, then, I beseech you—"

The words of a sudden blurred in Clare's ears and she heard them no more. A low cry, stifled before it came from her lips, but seeming to break through all the fiber of her heart, welled up in her.

"O my love—Roger—Roger, where are you? I must go to you."

For a moment, she was faint and stumbled blindly forward. Then her hands felt the cold stone of the buttress and she came back to herself. A thick veil seemed to lift from her eyes.

"I have made a great mistake," she thought with a strange calmness and sureness. "Love is after all the best thing—and I have known it all along. I wonder if it is too late."

Her mind seemed as if it had suddenly become relieved of a burden that was hampering

it, and to her surprise became at once perfectly collected. She saw what she must do. She must get word immediately to Roger Calthrop of her change of decision, must tell him that she would marry him, that she cared for nothing but him.

Rapidly she reviewed the situation. The Federal Express for Washington on which he was leaving left Boston at eight o'clock, and there was still one train in from Downham that would reach the city before it left. She knew nothing of Roger's rooms and there was no one whom she could trust to take a message for her. She must go herself and meet him at the South Station.

A faint blush tinged Clare's cheeks at the thought. What would he think, what would the world think? But suddenly, in its train, she felt both her old buoyancy of heart and her former spirit of mockery coming back to her.

"Why so squeamish at this late day, young lady?" she addressed herself dryly.

Then immediately the question was followed by a burst of a song in her heart as at the realization of some sweet impulse that had long

been strangled in her—much the same song by the way that she had been singing on the day she had first met Roger Calthrop.

"Oh, won't it be joyful! Oh, won't it be joyful—to be with him—"

Blushing faintly, she checked herself with a laugh.

"Don't be a fool, Clare Manton."

She took out her watch and looked at it. It was nearly half-past five, and the train, she knew, left at five-forty. The church was within a hundred yards of the station, but it would be well very soon to be taking her way toward the latter.

Suddenly a realization flashed over her, and made her hold her breath. She had not about her a cent of money. There was no time to go back to the house and no one from whom she could borrow. A flash of fear, like the stab of a knife, cut her. She could not get in town without her fare.

The preacher's words for the last moment or two had been blurred by her own thoughts, and her eyes had been roving restlessly about the church. Just then in the process, they

halted and Clare gave a start. A low laugh broke from her.

"I wonder if I dare do it," she thought, with a great thrill of hope and excitement.

The great Fourteenth Century window in the chancel was at that moment occupied by plain glass, provisional to the final filling of it by a memorial window (not yet arrived from the English designers) to that early Mortimer Dane who had been incumbent of Downham a century or more before. The church being rather small, the window descended almost to the level of the communion table beneath, and one pane for some reason of the sexton's had been left tilted open. And on the altar just below it, lay the offering on the silver plates.

"It would be all for a good cause, and I could refund it in some way," she said slowly.

A little shudder, half delicious, half fearful, at the thought of violating holy things, came over her. Then all her scruples vanished and she was filled with a sense of silent laughter.

"Good-by, dear people!" she exclaimed to herself, throwing one more swift glance over the congregation inside. "Who knows what

will happen before you see me again? Good-by, Mother, and Meg; good-by, Uncle Morty and Aunt Sarah. Good-by, you silly Alfred—you won't mind it a bit after it's all happened. Some girl'll get hold of you by that time and do just what I did—bowl you off your silly old feet. And good-by, Uncle Dicky, with compliments on the sermon and the good turn you have done me. If you would only pray for me now—"

She was laughing still when she finished her unspoken adieus to her friends and drew away carefully from the window. But a little line of anxiety nevertheless was visible in her forehead. She had more fear than she acknowledged of what she was about to do.

And yet it was comparatively simple. She had noted carefully the position of the flowers on the altar and saw that concealed by them she could with care reach in her hand as far as the offering plates. She had even noticed a bill visible on one of them.

As has been said, a faint sense of delight at something wicked, held her as she carefully made her way through the churchyard and to

the rear of the chancel. And yet there was side by side with it a certain humility in her mind, a sympathetic understanding of the nature of religious things, a gentleness and sweetness that Clare had seldom known before.

"I mean no harm," she said, half pathetically—for she was rather addressing a Person Whom before she had known only formally, "and it will help me to undo some I have done. And I will give the money back.

"Nevertheless," she exclaimed to herself the moment after with a bit of a laugh, "it will be exceedingly awkward, if I am caught. I must be awfully careful."

She had by this time by stooping low got herself around directly under the open glass in the chancel window. As far as the out-of-doors went, there was no one to see her, and her only problem was how to consummate her borrowing from within. She could hear Dicky Dane's voice again from her position now and knew that he was at the end of his sermon.

"I will just wait for the words he says at the end," she thought to herself timorously.

"The people will all be looking down then."

She had determined just how she should stoop to avoid being seen and how she could thrust her arm through the open pane and was sure just where her hand could reach down behind the vase of asters toward the plate. She waited a couple of minutes with nerves high-strung and pulse beating fast, till she could hear at last the preacher's voice growing slower and speaking in the greater stillness of a hushed congregation. Then there was a moment's silence and she caught the beginning of the words for which she was waiting.

"Now," she said with a gasp.

Carefully, quickly, she thrust in her arm through the window. She could not feel the money on the plate for a second, and a wild fear that she had miscalculated the distance, seized on her. But the next, her fingers touched the bill on top and closed on it.

"It isn't wrong," she said to herself reassuringly.

The silence within and without was intense, and as she drew her hand and the bank note

in it back, she could hear the distant whistling of the train coming up the track from Bromesgrove.

"I'm all right, but I must hurry," she thought.

She felt herself weak, however, with the realization of her success and had to rest there a second, half kneeling. Her feat had all been accomplished in a second and the last words of the ascription came to her at that moment as they gave to God "all honor, power, might, dominion, and praise."

Clare looked at the money in her hand, as she heard them, with the thought of all it meant.

"You precious criminal!" she smiled to herself, thinking of the words, and what the words meant. "Do you think *you're* doing it?"

A low, deep, sweet burst of laughter welled up in her heart as if in answer to the question. The next instant she had stolen away through the churchyard, out on to the road, and was running toward the station and the approaching train.

THE END

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